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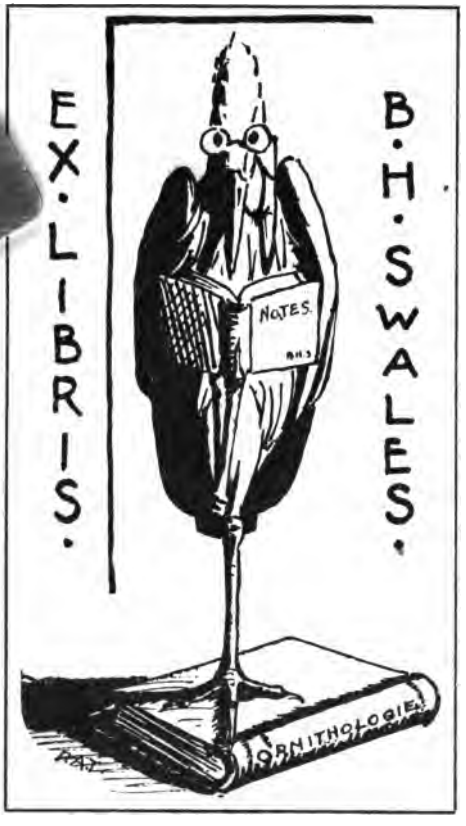
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NATURE'S INVITATION

NATURE'S INVITATION

NOTES OF A BIRD-GAZER NORTH AND SOUTH

BY

BRADFORD TORREY

"On Nature's invitation do I come." — WORDSWORTH.

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
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MAR. 3- 25-39

CONTENTS

NEW HAMPSHIRE

	PAGE
A May Visit to Moosilauke	3
A Week on Mount Washington	32
Above the Birds	41
Mountain-Top and Valley	50
In the Mount Lafayette Forest	57
On Bald Mountain	65
Birds and Bright Leaves	72

FLORIDA

First Impressions of Miami	83
A Frosty Morning	89
Bewilderment	96
Waiting for the Music	104
Peripatetic Botany	111
A Peep at the Everglades	120
The Beginnings of Spring	128
Fair Ormond	136
A Day in the Woods	142
Picture and Song	151

TEXAS AND ARIZONA

In Old San Antonio	161
A Bird-Gazer's Puzzles	171
Luck on the Prairie	179

Over the Border 188
First Days in Tucson 196
Mobbed in Arizona 205
An Idle Afternoon 215
Shy Life in the Desert 224
A New Acquaintance 233
The Desert Rejoices 242
Nests and Other Matters 251
A Flycatcher and a Sparrow 259
A Bunch of Bright Birds 266

Index 295

NEW HAMPSHIRE

A MAY VISIT TO MOOSILAUKE

WHEN a man sets forth on an out-of-door pleasure jaunt, his prayer is for weather. If he is going to the mountains, let him double his urgency. In the mountains, if nowhere else, weather is three fifths of life.

My first trip to New Hampshire the present season[1] was made under smooth, high clouds, which left the distance clear, so that the mountains stood up grandly beyond the lake as we ran along its western border. Not a drop of rain fell till I stepped off the car at Warren. At that moment the world grew suddenly dark, and before I could get into the open carriage the clouds burst, and with a rattling of thunder bolts a deluge of rain and hail descended upon us. There was no contending with such an adversary, though a good woman across the way, commiserating our plight, came to the door with proffers of an umbrella. I retreated to the station, while the driver hastened down the street to put his team under shelter. So a half hour passed. Then we tried again, and half frozen, in spite of a winter

[1] 1900.

overcoat and everything that goes with it (the date was May 17), I reached my destination, five miles away, at the foot of Moosilauke.

All this would hardly deserve narration, perhaps (the story of travelers' discomforts being mostly matter for skipping), only that it marked the setting in of a cold, rainy "spell" that hung upon us for four days. Four sunless days out of seven was a proportion fairly to be complained of. The more I consider it, the truer seems the equation just now stated, that mountain weather is three fifths of life. For those four days I did not even *see* Moosilauke, though we were living, so to speak, upon its shoulder, and I knew by hearsay that the summit house was visible from the back doorstep.

My first brief walk before supper should reasonably have been in the clearer valley country; but if reason spoke inclination did not hear it, and my feet — which seem to feel that they are old enough by this time to know their master's business for him — took of their own motion an opposite course. The mountain woods, as I entered them, had the appearance of early March: only the merest sprinkling of new life, — clintonia leaves especially, with here and there a round-leaved violet, both leaves and flowers, — upon a ground still all defaced by the hand of

Winter. Dead leaves make an agreeable carpet, as they rustle cheerfully-sadly under one's feet in autumn; but there was no rustle here; the snow had pressed every leaf flat and left it sodden. One thing consoled me: I had not arrived too late. The "bud-crowned spring," for all my fears, was yet to "go forth."

The next morning it was not enough to say that *it* was cloudy. That impersonal expression would have been quite below the mark. *We* were cloudy. In short, the cloud was literally around us and upon us. As I stepped out of doors, a rose-breasted grosbeak was singing in one direction, and a white-throated sparrow in another, both far away in the mist. It was strange they should be so happy, I was ready to say. But I bethought myself that their case was no different from my own. It was comparatively clear just about me, while the fog shut down like a curtain a rod or two away, leaving the rest of the world dark. So every bird stood in a ring of light, an illuminated chantry all his own,

> And sang for joy, good Christian bird,
> To be thus marked and favored.

Strange had he *not* been happy. To be blest above one's fellows is to be blest twice over.

This time I took the downward road, turning

to the left, and found myself at once in pleasant woods, with hospitable openings and bypaths; a birdy spot, or I was no prophet, though just now but few voices were to be heard, and those of the commonest. Here stood new-blown anemones, bellworts, and white violets, an early flock, with one painted trillium lording it over them; a small specimen of its kind, but big enough to be king (or shepherd) in such company. A brook, or perhaps two, with the few birds, sang about me, invisible. I knew not whither I was going, and the all-embracing cloud deepened the mystery. Soon the road took a sudden dip, and a louder noise filled my ears. I was coming to a river? Yes, for presently I was on the bridge, with a raging mountain torrent, eighty feet, perhaps, underneath, foaming against the boulders; a bare, perpendicular cliff on one side, and perpendicular spruces and hemlocks draping a similar cliff on the other side. It was Baker's River, I was told afterward, — the same that I had looked at here and there, the day before, from the car window. It was good to see it so young and exuberant; but even a young river need not be so much in haste, I thought. It would get to the sawmills soon enough, and by and by would learn, too late, that it is only a little way to the sea.

Once over the bridge, the road climbed quickly out of the narrow gorge, and at the first turn brought me in sight of a small painted house, with a small orchard of thrifty-looking small trees behind it. Here a venerable collie came running forth to bark at the stranger, but yielded readily to the usual blandishments, and after sniffing again and again at my heels, just to make sure of knowing me the next time, went back, contented, to lie down in his old place before the window. He was the only person that spoke to me — the only one I met — during the forenoon, though I spent it all on the highway.

Another patch of woods, where a distant Canadian nuthatch is calling (strange how I love that nasal, penetrating, far-reaching voice, whose quality my reasoning taste condemns), and I see before me another house, standing in broad acres of cleared land. This one is not painted, and, as I presently make out, is uninhabited, its old tenant gone, dead or discouraged, and no new one looked for; an "abandoned farm," such as one grows used to seeing in our northern country. It is beautiful for situation, one of those sightly places which the city-worn passer-by in a mountain wagon pitches upon at once as just the place he should like to buy and

retire to — *some* day; in that autumn of golden leisure of which, now and then,

"When all his active powers are still,"

he has a pleasing vision. Oh yes, he means to do something of that kind — some day; and even while he talks of it he knows in his heart that "some day" is only another name for "next day after never."

A few happy barn swallows (wise enough, or simple enough, to be happy *now*) go skimming over the grass, and a pair of robins and a pair of bluebirds seem to be at home in the orchard; which they like none the worse, we may be sure, — the bluebirds, especially, — because, along with the house and the barn, it is falling into decay. What are apple trees for, but to grow old and become usefully hollow? Otherwise they would be no better than so many beeches or butternuts. It is impossible but that every creature should look at the world through its own eyes; and no bluebird ever ate an apple. A purple finch warbles ecstatically, a white-throated sparrow whistles in the distance, and now and then, from far down the slope, I catch the upliftings of a hermit thrush.

A man grows thoughtful, not to say sentimental, in such a place, surrounded by fields on which so many years of human labor have been

spent, so much ploughing and harrowing, planting and reaping, now given up again to nature. Here was the garden patch, its outlines still traceable. Here was the well. Long lines of stone wall still separate the mowing land from the pasturage; and scattered over the fields are heaps of boulders, thrown together thus to get them out of the grass's way. About the edges of every pile, and sometimes through the midst, have sprung up a few shrubs, — shad bushes, cherries, willows, and the like. Here they escape the scythe, as we are all trying to do. "Give us room that we may dwell!" — so these children of Zion cry. It is the great want of seeds, so many millions of which go to waste annually in every acre, — a place in which to take root and (harder yet) to keep it. And the birds, too, find the boulder heaps a convenience. I watch a savanna sparrow as he flits from one to another, stopping to sing a measure or two from each. Even this humble, almost voiceless artist needs a stage or platform. The lowliest sparrow ever hatched has some rudiments of a histrionic faculty; and be we birds or humans, it is hard to do one's best without a bit of posing.

What further uses these humble stone heaps may serve I cannot say; no doubt they shelter many insects; but it is encouraging to consider

how few things a farmer can do that will not be of benefit to others beside himself. Surely the man who piled these boulders for the advantage of his hay crop never expected them to serve as a text for preaching.

The cloud drops again, and is at its old trick of exaggeration. A bird that I take for a robin turns out to be a sparrow. Did it look larger because it seemed to be farther away than it really was? Or is it seen now as it actually is, my vision not being deceived, but rather corrected of an habitual error? The fog makes for me a newer and stranger world, at any rate; I am farther from home because of it; another day's travel might have done less for me. And for all that, I am not sorry when it rises again, and the hills come out. How beautiful they are! They will hardly be more so, I think, when the June foliage replaces the square miles of bare boughs which now give them a blue-purple tint, interrupted here and there by patches of new yellow-green poplar leaves — a veritable illumination, sun-bright even in this sunless weather — or a few sombre evergreens.

As I get away from the farm, the mountain woods on either side seem to be filled with something like a chorus of rose-breasted grosbeaks. Except for a few days at Highlands, North Caro-

lina, some years ago, I have never seen so many together. A grand "migratory wave" must have broken on the mountains within a night or two. As far as music is concerned, the grosbeaks have the field mostly to themselves, though a grouse beats his drum at short intervals, and now and then a white-throat whistles. There is no bird's voice to which a fog is more becoming, I say to myself, with a pleasing sense of having said something unintended. To my thinking, the white-throat should always be a good distance away (perhaps because in the mountains one grows accustomed to hearing him thus); and the fog puts him there, with no damage to the fullness of his tone.

Looking at the flowers along the wayside, — a few yellow violets, a patch of spring-beauties, and little else, — my eye falls upon what seems to be a miniature forest of curious tiny plants growing in the gutter. At first I see only the upright, whitish stalks, an inch or two in height, each bearing at the top a globular brown knob. Afterward I discover that the stalks, which, examined more closely, have a crystalline, glassy appearance, spring from a leaf-like or lichen-like growth, lying prostrate upon the wet soil. The plant is a liverwort, or scale-moss, of some kind, I suppose, and is growing here by the mile. How

few are the things we see! And of those we see, how few there are concerning which we have any real knowledge, — enough, even, to use words about them! (When a man can do that concerning any class of natural objects, no matter what they are or what he says about them, he passes with the crowd for a scholar, or at the very least, a "close observer.") But to tell the shameful truth, my mood just now is not inquisitive. I should like to know? Yes; but I can get on without knowing. There are worse things than ignorance. Let this plant be what it will. I should be little the wiser for being able to name it.[1] I have no body of facts to which to attach this new one; and unrelated knowledge is almost the same as none at all. At best it is quickly forgotten. So my indolence excuses itself.

The road begins to climb rather sharply. Unless I am going to the top of the ridge and beyond, I have gone far enough. So I turn my back upon the mountain; and behold, the cloud having lifted again, there, straight before me down the road and across the valley, is the house from which I set out, almost or quite the only one in sight. After all, I have walked but a little way, though I have been a good while

[1] It may have been some species of *Pellia*, to judge by the plate in *Gray's Manual*.

about it; for I have hardly begun my return before I find myself again approaching the abandoned farm. Downhill miles are short. Here a light shower comes on, and I raise my umbrella. Then follows a grand excitement among a flock of sheep, whose day, perhaps, needs enlivening as badly as my own. They gaze at the umbrella, start away upon the gallop, stop again to look ("There are forty looking like one," I say to myself), and are again struck with panic. This time they scamper down the field out of sight. Another danger escaped! Shepherds, it is evident, cannot be so effeminate as to carry umbrellas.

Two heifers are of a more confiding disposition, coming close to look at the stranger as he sits on the doorsill of the old barn. Their curiosity concerning me is perhaps about as lively as mine was touching the supposed liverworts. Like me they stand and consider, but betray no unmannerly eagerness. "Who is he, I wonder?" they might be saying; "I never saw him before." But their jaws still move mechanically, and their beautiful eyes are full of a peaceful satisfaction. A cud must be a great alleviation to the temper. With such a perennial sedative, how could any one ever be fretted into nervous prostration? As a matter of fact, I am told,

cows rarely or never suffer from that most distressing ailment. I have seen chewers of gum before now who, by all signs, should have enjoyed a similar immunity.

While the heifers are still making up their minds about their unexpected visitor, I turn to examine a couple of white-crowned sparrows, male and female, — I wonder if they really *are* a couple? — feeding before the house. I hope the species is to prove common here. Three birds were behind the hotel before breakfast, and one of them sang. The quaint little medley, sparrow song and warbler song together, is still something of an event with me, I have heard it so seldom and like it so well; and whether the birds sing or not, they are musical to look at.

When I approach the painted house, on my way homeward, the fat old collie comes running out again, barking. This time, however, he takes but one sniff. He has made a mistake, and realizes it at once. "Oh, excuse me," he says quite plainly. "I didn't recognize you. You're the same old codger. I ought to have known." And he is so confused and ashamed that he hurries away without waiting to make up.

It is a great mortification to a gentlemanly dog to find himself at fault in this manner. I

remember another collie, much younger than this one, with whom I once had a minute or two of friendly intercourse. Then, months afterward, I went again by the house where he lived, and he came dashing out with all fierceness, as if he would rend me in pieces. I let him come (there was nothing else to do, or nothing else worth doing), but the instant his nose struck me he saw his error. Then, in a flash, he dropped flat on the ground, and literally licked my shoes. There was no attitude abject enough to express the depth of his humiliation. And then, like the dog of this morning, he jumped up, and ran with all speed back to his doorstep.

Another descent into the gorge of Baker's River, and another stop on the bridge (how gloriously the water comes down!), and I am again in the pretty, broken woods below the hotel. Here my attention is attracted by an almost prostrate but still vigorous yellow birch, like the one that stood for so many years by the road below the Profile House, in the Franconia Notch. Somehow the tree got an awkward slant in its youth, and has always kept it, while the larger branches have grown straight upward, at right angles with the trunk, as if each were trying to be a tree on its own account. The Franconia Notch specimen became a landmark, and was

really of no inconsiderable service; a convenience to the hotel proprietors, and a means of health to idle boarders, who needed an incentive to exercise. "Come, let 's walk down as far as the bent tree," one would say to another. The average American cannot stroll; he has never learned; if he puts his legs in motion, he must go to some fixed point, though it be only a milestone or a huckleberry bush. The infirmity is most likely congenital, a taint in the blood. The fathers worked, — all honor to them, — having to earn their bread under hard conditions; and the children, though they may dress like the descendants of princes, cannot help turning even their amusements into a stint.

And the sapient critic? Well, instead of carrying a fishing rod or walking to a bent tree, he had come out with an opera-glass, and had made of his morning jaunt a bird-cataloguing expedition. Considered in that light, the trip had not been a brilliant success. In my whole forenoon I had seen and heard but twenty-eight species. If I had stayed in my low-country village, and walked half as far, I should have counted twice as many. But I should not have enjoyed myself one quarter as well.

The next day and the next were rainy, with Moosilauke still invisible. Then came a morn-

ing of sunshine and clear atmosphere. So far it was ideal mountain weather; but the cold wind was so strong at our level that it was certain to be nothing less than a hurricane at the top. I waited, therefore, twenty-four hours longer. Then, at quarter before seven on the morning of May 23, I set out. I am as careful of my dates, it seems, as if I had been starting for the North Pole. And why not? The importance of an expedition depends upon the spirit in which it is undertaken. Nothing is of serious consequence in this world except as subjective considerations make it so. Even the North Pole is only an imaginary point, the end of an imaginary line, as old geographies used to inform us, pleonastically, — as if "position without dimensions," a something without length, breadth, or thickness, could be other than imaginary. I started, then, at quarter before seven. Many years ago I had been taken up the mountain road in a carriage; now I would travel it on foot, spending at least an hour upon each of its five miles, and so see something of the mountain itself, as well as of the prospect from the summit.

The miles, some longer, some shorter, as I thought (a not unpleasant variety, though the fourth stage was excessively spun out, it seemed to me, perhaps to make it end at the spring),

are marked off by guideboards, so that the newcomer need not fall into the usual disheartening mistake of supposing himself almost at the top before he has gone halfway. As for the first mile, which must measure near a mile and a half, and which ends just above the "second brook" (every mountain path has its natural waymarks), I had been over it twice within the last few days, so that the edge of my curiosity was dulled; but, with one excuse and another, I managed easily enough to give it its allotted hour. For one thing, a hairy woodpecker detained me five or ten minutes, putting such tremendous vigor into his hammering that I was positively certain (with a shade of uncertainty, nevertheless, such as all "observers" will understand; there is nothing so true as a paradox) that he must be a *pileatus*, till at last he showed himself. "Well, well," said I, "guesswork is a poor dependence." It was well I had stayed by. The forest was so nearly deserted, so little animated, that I felt under obligation to the fellow for every stroke of his mallet. Though a man goes to the wood for silence, his ear craves some natural noises, — enough, at least, to make the stillness audible.

The second mile is of steeper grade than the first, and toward the close brought me suddenly to a place unlike anything that had gone before.

I named it at once the Flower Garden. For an acre, or, more likely, for two or three acres, the ground — a steep southern exposure, held up to face the sun — was covered with plants in bloom: Dutchman's-breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*), — bunches of heart-shaped, cream-white flowers with yellow facings, looking for all the world as if they had been planted there; round-leaved violets in profusion; white violets (*blanda*); spring-beauties; adder's-tongue (dog's-tooth violet); and painted trillium. A pretty show; pretty in itself, and a thousand times prettier for being happened upon thus unexpectedly, after two hours of woods that were almost as dead as winter.

Only a little way above this point were the first beds of snow; and henceforward, till I came out upon the ridge, two miles above, the woods were mostly filled with it, though there was little in the road. About this time, also, I began to notice a deer's track. He had descended the road within a few hours, as I judged, or since the last rainfall, and might have been a two-legged, or even a one-legged animal, — biped or uniped, — so far as his footsteps showed. I should rather have seen *him*, but the hoofprints were a deal better than nothing; and undoubtedly I saw them much longer than I could possibly have seen the maker of them, and so, perhaps,

got out of them more of companionship. They were with me for two hours, — clean up to the ridge, and part way across it.

Somewhere between the third and fourth mile-boards I stopped short with an exclamation. There, straight before me, over the long eastern shoulder of Moosilauke, beyond the big Jobildunk Ravine, loomed or floated a shining snow-white mountain-top. Nothing could have been more beautiful. It was the crest of Mount Washington, I assumed, though even with the aid of a glass I could make out no sign of buildings, which must have been matted with new-fallen snow. I took its identity for granted, I say. The truth is, I became badly confused about it afterward, such portions of the range as came into view having an unfamiliar aspect; but later still, on arriving at the summit, found that my first idea had been correct.

That sudden, heavenly apparition gave me one of those minutes that are good as years. Once, indeed, in early October, I had seen Mount Washington when it was more resplendent: freshly snow-covered throughout, and then, as the sun went down, lighted up before my eyes with a rosy glow, brighter and brighter and brighter, till it seemed all on fire within. But even that unforgettable spectacle had less of

unearthly beauty, was less a work of pure enchantment, I thought, than this detached, fleecy-looking piece of aerial whiteness, cloud stuff or dream stuff, yet whiter than any cloud, lying at rest yonder, almost at my own level, against the deep blue of the forenoon sky.

All this while, the birds, which had been few from the start, — black-throated greens and blues, Blackburnians, oven-birds, a bay-breast, blue yellow-backs, siskins, Swainson thrushes, a blue-headed vireo, winter wrens, rose-breasted grosbeaks, chickadees, grouse, and snowbirds, — had grown fewer and fewer, till at last, among these stunted, low-branched spruces, with the snow under them, there was little else but an occasional myrtle warbler ("The brave myrtle," I kept saying to myself), with its musical, soft trill, so out of place, — the voice of peaceful green valleys rather than of stormy mountain-tops, — yet so welcome. Once a gray-cheeked thrush called just above me. These impenetrable upper woods are the gray-cheeks' summer home, — a worthy one; but I heard nothing of their wild music, and doubted whether they had yet arrived in full summer force.

It was past eleven o'clock when I came out at the clearing by the woodpile, with half the world before me. From this point it was but a little

way to the bare ridge connecting the South Peak — up which I had been trudging all the forenoon — and the main summit. This, with its little hotel, that looked as if it were in danger of sliding off the mountain northward, was straight before me across the ravine, a long but easy mile away.

On the ridge I found myself all at once in something like a gale of ice-cold wind. Who could have believed it? It was well I had brought a sweater; and squatting behind a lucky clump of low evergreens, I wormed my way into what is certainly the most comfortable of all garments for such a place, — as good, at least, as two overcoats. Now let the wind whistle, especially as it was at my back, and was bearing me triumphantly up the slope. So I thought, bravely enough, till the trail took a sudden shift, and the gale caught me on another tack. Then I sang out of the other corner of my mouth, as I used to hear country people say. I no longer boasted, but saved my breath for better use.

Wind or no wind, it is an exhilaration to walk here above the world. Once a bird chirps to me timidly from the knee-wood close by. I answer him, and out peeps a white-throat. "*You* here!" he says; "so early!" At my feet is plenty of

Greenland sandwort, — faded, winter-worn, gray-green tufts, tightly packed among the small boulders. Whatever lives here must lie low and hang on. And with it is the shiny-leaved mountain cranberry, — *Vaccinium Vitis-Idæa*. Let me never omit that pretty name. Neither cranberry nor sandwort shows any sign of blossom or bud as yet; but it is good to know that they will both be ready when the clock strikes. I can see them now, pink and white, just as they will look in July — nay, just as they will look a thousand years hence.

Again my course alters, and the wind lets me lean back upon it as it lifts me forward. Who says we are growing old? The years, as they pass, may turn and look at us meaningly, as if to say, "You have lived long enough;" yet even to us the climbing of a mountain road (though by this time it must *be* a road, or something like it) is still only the putting of one foot before the other.

So I come at last to the top, and make haste to get into the lee of the house, which is tightly barred, of course, just as its owners left it seven or eight months ago. The wind chases me round the corners, one after another; but by searching I discover a nook where it can hit me no more than half the time. Here I sit and look at the

mountains, — a glorious company: Mount Washington and its fellows, with all their higher parts white; the sombre mass of the Twins on this side of them; and, nearer still, the long, sharp, purple crest of dear old Lafayette and its southern neighbors. So many I can name. The rest are mountains only; a wilderness of heaped-up, forest-covered land; a prospect to dilate the soul.

My expectation has been to stay here for two hours or more; but the wind is merciless, and after going out over the broad, bare, boulder-sprinkled summit till I can see down into Franconia (which looks pretty low and pretty far off, though I distinguish certain of the buildings clearly enough), I begin to feel that I shall enjoy the sight of my eyes better from some sheltered position on the upper part of the road. Even on the ridge, however, I take advantage of every tuft of spruces to stand still for a bit, looking especially at the mountain itself, so big, so bare, and so solid: East Peak, South Peak, and *the* Peak, as they are called, although neither of them is in the slightest degree peaked, with the great gulf of Jobildunk — in which Baker's River rises — wedged among them. If the word Moosilauke means a "bald place," as it is said to do, then we have here another proof of the

North American Indian's genius for fitting words to things.[1]

Even to-day, windy and cold as it is, a butterfly passes over now and then (mostly red admirals), and smaller insects flit carelessly about. Insects are capable mountaineers, as I have often found occasion to notice. The only time I was ever on the sharp point of Mount Adams, where my companion and I had barely room to stand together, the air about our heads was black with insects of all sorts and sizes, a veritable cloud; and when we unscrewed the Appalachian Club's brass bottle to sign the roll of visitors, we found that the signers immediately before us, after putting down a date and their names, had added, "Plenty of bugs." And surely I was never pestered worse by black flies than once, years ago, on this very summit of Moosilauke. All the hours of a long, breathless, tropical July day they made life miserable for me. Better a thousand times such a frosty, man-compelling wind as I am now fleeing from.

Once off the ridge, I can loosen my hat and sit down in comfort. The sun is good. How in-

[1] And if New Hampshire people will call the mountain "Moose Hillock," as, alas, they will, then we have here another proof of the degeneracy which follows the white man's addiction to the punning habit.

credible it seems that the air is so furiously in motion only fifty rods back! Here it is like Elysium. And almost I believe that this limited prospect is better than the grander sweep from the summit itself, — less distracting and more restful. So half a loaf may be better than a whole one, if a man cannot be contented without trying to eat the whole one. A white-throat and a myrtle warbler sing to me as I nibble my sandwich. They are the loftiest spirits, it appears. I take off my hat to them.

Already I am down far enough to catch the sound of running water; and every rod brings a new mountain into view from behind the long East Peak. One of the best of them all is cone-shaped Kearsarge, topped with its house. Now the white crest of Washington rises upon me, — snow with the sun on it; and here, by the fourth mileboard, are a few pale-bright spring-beauties, — five or six blossoms only. They have found a bit of earth from which the snow melted early, and here they are, true to their name, with the world on every side nothing but a desolation. If it is time for myrtle warblers, why not for them? Now I see not only Washington, but the mountains with it, all strangely foreshortened, so as to give the highest peak a most surprising preëminence. No wonder I was in doubt what to call it.

In days past I have walked that whole ridge, from Clinton to Adams; and glad I am to remember it. A man should do such things while he can, teaching his feet to feel the ground, and letting his heart cheer him.

A turn in the road, and straight below me lies my deserted farmhouse. Another turn, and I lose it. In ascending a mountain we face the path; in descending we face the world. I speak thus because at this moment I am looking down a charming vista, — forest-covered mountains, row beyond row. But for the gravel under my feet I might be a thousand miles from any human habitation. Presently a Swainson thrush whistles. By that token I am getting away from the summit, though things are still wintry enough, with no sign of bud or blossom.

And look! What is that far below me, facing up the road? A four-footed beast of some kind. A bear? No; I raise my glass, and see a porcupine. He has his mobile, sensitive nose to the ground, and continues to smell, and perhaps to feed, as I draw nearer and nearer. By and by, being very near, and still unworthy of the creature's notice, I roll a stone toward him. At this he shows a gleam of interest. He sits up, folds his hands, — puts his fore paws together over his breast, — looks at me, and then waddles a few

steps toward the upper side of the road. "I must be getting out of this," he seems to think. But he reconsiders his purpose, comes back, sits on end again and folds his hands; and then, the reconnoissance being satisfactory, falls to smelling the ground as before. I can see the tips of his nostrils twitching as in a kind of ecstasy. There must be something savory under them. Meantime, still with my glass lifted, I come closer and closer, till I am right upon him. If porcupines can shoot, I must be in danger of a quill. Another step or two, and he waddles to the lower side of the road. He is a vacillating body, however; and once more he turns to sit up and fold his hands. This time I hear him rattling his teeth, but not very fiercely, — nothing to compare with the gnashings of an angry woodchuck; and at last, when I cluck to him, he hastens his steps a little, as much, perhaps, as a porcupine can, and disappears in the brush, dragging his ridiculous, sloping, straw-thatched hinder parts — a combination of lean-to and L — after him. He has never cultivated speed or decision of character, having a better defense. So far as appearances go, he is certainly an odd one.

There are no blossoms yet, nor visible promise of any, but once in a while a bright Atalanta (red admiral) butterfly flits before me. I wonder

if I could capture one by the old schoolboy method? I am moved to try; but my best effort — not very determined, it must be confessed — ends in failure. Perhaps I should have had some golden apples.

At last I come to a few adder's-tongues, the first flowers since the five or six spring-beauties a mile and a half back. Yes, I am approaching the Flower Garden; for here is a most lovely bank of yellow violets, a hundred or two together, a real bed of them. Nobody ever saw anything prettier. Here, also, is the showy purple trillium, not so unhandsomely overgrown as it sometimes is, in addition to all the flowers that I noticed on the ascent. A garden indeed. I pull up a root of Dutchman's-breeches, and sit down to examine the cluster of rice-like pink kernels at the base of the stem. Excellent fodder they must make for animals of some kind. "Squirrel-corn" is an apt name, I think, though I believe it is applied, not to this species, but to its relative, *Dicentra Canadensis*.

The whole plant is uncommonly clean-looking and attractive, with its pale, finely dissected leaves and its delicate, waxy bloom; but looking at it, and then at a bank of round-leaved violets opposite, I say once more, "Those are *my* flowers." Something in the shade of color is most exactly

to my taste. The very sight of them gladdens me like sunshine. But before I get out of the garden, as I am in no haste to do (if it was attractive this morning, it is doubly so now, after those miles of snowbanks), I am near to changing my mind; for suddenly, as my eye follows the border of the road, it falls upon a small blue violet, the first of that color that I have noticed since my arrival at Moosilauke. It must be my long-desired *Selkirkii*, I say to myself, and down I go to look at it. Yes, it is not leafy-stemmed, the petals are not bearded, and the leaves are unlike any I have ever seen. I take it up, root and all, and search carefully till I find one more. If it *is* Selkirkii, as I feel sure it is,[1] then I am happy. This is the one species of our eastern North American violets that I have never picked. It completes my set. And it is especially good to find it here, where I was not in the least expecting it. With the two specimens in my pocket I trudge the remaining two miles in high spirits. The violets are no newer to me than the liverwort specimens on Mount Cushman were, but they have the incomparable advantage of things long looked for, — things for the lack of which, so to speak, a pigeonhole in the mind has stood

[1] And so it was; for though I *felt* sure, I wanted to *be* sure, and submitted it to an expert.

consciously vacant. Blessed are they who want something, for when they get it they will be glad.

The weather below had been warm and still, a touch of real summer. So said the people at the hotel; and I knew it already; for, as I came through the cattle pasture, I saw below me a new, strange-looking, brightly illuminated grove of young birches. "Were those trees there this morning?" I thought. A single day had covered them with sunny, yellow-green leaves, till the change was like a miracle. Indeed, it *was* a miracle. May the spring never come when I shall fail to feel it so. Then I looked back at the summit. Was it there, no farther away than that, that so icy a wind had chased me about? — or had I been in Greenland?

A WEEK ON MOUNT WASHINGTON

I WENT up Mount Washington in the afternoon of August 22d, and came down again in the afternoon of the 29th. Ten years before I had spent a week there, in early July, and had not visited the place since. In some respects, of course, the summit is badly damaged (I have heard it spoken of as utterly ruined) by the presence of the hotel and other buildings, not to mention the railway trains, with their daily freight of bustling lunch-box tourists. Still the railway and the hotel are indisputable conveniences; I should hardly have stayed there so long without them; and in this imperfect world we must not expect to find all the good things in one basket.

As for the tourists, one need walk but a few steps to be rid of them. As a class they are not enterprising pedestrians. In fifteen minutes you may find yourself where human beings are as far away, practically, as if you were among the highest Andes or on the famous "peak in Darien." There you may sit on a boulder, or recline on a mat of prostrate willow, and imagine

yourself the only man in the world; gazing at the prospect, listening to the mountain silence (there is none like it), or eating alpine blueberries, as lonely as any hermit's heart could wish. All this you may do, and then return to the most obliging of hosts, the best of good dinners, and a comfortable bed.

By the time you have been there two days, moreover, you will have begun to enjoy the hotel, not only for its physical comforts, but as an interesting miniature world. The manager and the clerk, the waiters and the bellboys, the editors and the printers, the night watchman and the train conductor, will all have become your friends, almost your blood relations, — such intimate good feeling does a joint seclusion induce, — and at any minute of the day in may come a group of strangers of the most engagingly picturesque sort; having no more the appearance of sales-ladies or women of fashion, shopkeepers or bankers' clerks, than of college students and professors. They are men and women. They have put off the fine clothes and the smug appearance which society exacts of its members; they look not the least in the world as if they had just come out of a bandbox; their *negligée* costumes bear no resemblance to the dainty, immaculate rig of the tennis court or the golf links.

They are "roughing it" in earnest. For at least eight or ten hours, possibly for as many days, they have ceased to be concerned about the cut of their garments or the smoothness of their hair. Of some of them the aspect is fairly disreputable. It is a solemn fact that you may here see gentlemen with rents in their trousers and a week's beard on their faces. And ten to one they will brazen it out without apology.

The dapper clerk and the prosperous merchant and his wife, who have ridden up in the train with their good clothes and their company faces on, may stare if they will. It is nothing to the campers and walkers. They are not on parade, and do not mind being smiled at. A pretty college girl will walk about the office, alpenstock in hand, with her hair tied in a careless knot, her skirts well above the tops of her scratched and dusty boots, her face brown and her sleeves tucked up, and seem quite as much at ease as if she were in full evening dress with the drawing-room lights blazing upon her alabaster shoulders, her laces, and her diamonds. It is heroism (or heroinism) of a kind worth seeing.

You are still enjoying the spectacle when two men enter the door, one with a botanical box slung over his shoulder. It is as if he had given you the Masonic grip, and you hardly wait for

him to cross the sill before you make up to him with a question. By which route has he come, and what luck has he met with? Over the Crawford path, he answers, and though the season is pretty late, and Alpine plants are mostly out of bloom, he has found some interesting things.

Two or three of them he cannot name, and he opens the box. His special puzzle is a tiny, upright-growing plant, thickly set with roundish, crinkled leaves, and bearing a few blossoms so exceedingly small as almost to defy a common pocket-lens. Do you know what it is? Yes, to your own surprise, you remember, or seem to remember, and you run upstairs to bring down a Gray's Manual. The plant is *Euphrasia* (eyebright), an Alpine variety. It was pointed out to you ten years ago, near the same Crawford path, by the man who knew the Mount Washington flora better than any one else. You recall the time as if it had been yesterday. Your companion dropped suddenly upon his knees, eyes to the ground. "What are you looking for?" you asked; and he answered "Euphrasia." It is good to see it again. You find it for yourself the next day, it may be, in the Alpine Garden.

And this other plant, stiffly matted and long past flowering? Your new acquaintance supposes it to be *Diapensia;* and for that you need no

book. And this third one, with its rusty leaves, is the Lapland azalea. You remember the day you saw it first — in middle June — when all by yourself you were making your first ascent of the mountain, walking alternately over snowbanks and beds of flowers. So far as the lovely blossoms are concerned, you have never seen it since.

Next morning your botanist bids you good-by; he is going down by the way of Tuckerman's Ravine; and at noon, after some indolent, happy hours on the carriage-road and in the Alpine Garden, you are again in the hotel office when half a dozen campers from the northern peaks make their appearance. Dusty, travel-stained, disheveled, they bring the freedom of the hills with them and fill the place with their breeziness. Some of the "transients" clustered about the stove smile at a sight so unconventional, but the manager, the clerk, and the bellboys are better informed. They have seen the leader of the party before, and in a minute the word is passed round. This is Mr. ——, who came up the mountain with his son a year ago on the day of that dreadful storm, when two later adventurers upon the same path perished by the way, and he himself, old mountaineer that he was, with another life hanging upon his own, had more than once been all but ready to say, "It can't be done."

Your traveling companion has seen him here before, though she was not present on that memorable occasion, and presently you are being introduced to him and his friends — a metropolitan clergyman, a university professor, and a younger man, with whose excellent work in your own line you are already acquainted.

Anon the company breaks up, — the pedestrians are off for an afternoon excursion, — and you step out upon the platform to look about you. Against the railing are two men, one of them with what seems to be a "collecting gun" in his hand. "An ornithologist," you say to yourself, and at the word you begin edging toward him. A remark or two about the weather and you ask him point-blank if he is collecting birds. No, he answers, his weapon is a rifle, and he shows you the cartridge. He has brought it along to shoot squirrels with. You wonder why any one should think it worth while to carry a gun over the nine miles of the Crawford path for so trifling a use; but that is none of your business, and just then the other man speaks up to say that his companion is a botanist, while he himself is a "bird man." This is interesting (the second ornithologist within an hour), and you set about comparing notes. Did he hear anything of the Bicknell thrushes and the Hud-

sonian chickadees on his way up? No, he missed them both on this trip, though he has met them elsewhere in the mountains. You drop an innocent remark about the thrushes, and he says, "Are you Mr. So-and-So?" There is no denying it, and when he pronounces his own name it proves to be familiar; and a good talk follows. Then he starts down into the Alpine Garden, — you charging him to be sure to eat some of the delicious cespitose blueberries on the descent, — and ten minutes afterward he turns up again at your elbow. He has left his friend, and has hurried back to tell you of a sharp-shinned hawk that he has just seen. You may put the name into your Mount Washington bird list, if you will.

So the days pass — no day without a new acquaintance. If you and one of the local editors start down the trail to the Lakes of the Clouds after a Sunday-morning breakfast, you find yourselves going along with three Baltimore gentlemen, who have walked up from the Crawford House the day before ("Well, we arrive!" you remember to have heard the leader exclaim, as his foot struck the hotel platform), and are now on their return.

They introduce one another to you and your companion, — Dr. This, Dr. That, and Dr. The

Other, — and you pick your way downward over the boulders in Indian file, talking as you go. After a while you and the oldest of the Baltimoreans find yourselves falling a little behind the rest, and the conversation grows more and more friendly. He has come to New Hampshire, as he does every year, for the best of all tonics, a dose of mountain climbing. He has been somewhat overworked of late, especially with a long task of proof-reading. A new edition of his treatise on chemistry is passing through the press, and the moment the last sheets were corrected he broke away northward; and here he is, walking over high places, where he loves to be. "I am an old man," he says; but his strength is not abated. Far be the day! At the lakeside hands are shaken and good-bys said. You will most likely never see each other again, but one of you, at least, keeps a bright memory.

It is a strange place, the Summit House. Twice a day, as on the seashore, the tide rises and falls. But the evening flood is a small affair. The crowd comes at noon. It registers its name, eats its luncheon, writes a postal-card, buys a souvenir, asks a question or two, more or less pertinent ("Can you tell me where the Tip-Over House is?" one good woman said — for the rarified air plays queer pranks with its vic-

tims), possibly looks at the prospect, probably snaps a camera, and then takes the after-dinner train for the base. Evening passengers make a longer stay. They cannot do otherwise. For them the sunset and the sunrise are the great events. One would think that such phenomena were never to be witnessed in the low country. They watch the clouds, or more likely the cloud, and go to sleep with one ear open for the sunrise bell.

So much for the larger number of Summit House guests, the respectable majority. A few, two in twenty, perhaps, arrive on foot; and these are the good ones — the salt of the mountain, so to speak. This time I was not one of them, but I had no thought of denying the superiority of their privilege.

ABOVE THE BIRDS

In the course of my seven days at the summit of Mount Washington I listed six species of birds. A few snowbirds — three or four — were to be found almost always in the neighborhood of the stables; a myrtle warbler was seen on the climb up the cone from the Lakes of the Clouds; twice I heard a goldfinch passing somewhere overhead; a sharp-shinned hawk, as I took it to be, showed itself one day, none too clearly, flying through the mist; and the next afternoon, as I sat in the rear of the old Tip-Top House waiting for the glories of the sunset, a sparrow hawk shot past me so near as to display not only his rusty tail, but the black bands on the side of his neck. Here are five species. The sixth was one that, rightly or wrongly, I should not have expected to find in so treeless a place. I speak of the red-breasted (or Canadian) nuthatch. On two mornings, as all hands were out upon the platform at sunrise, we heard the characteristic nasal calls of this northern forester, and saw two birds scrambling about the roofs of the buildings; and more than once at other times I noticed one

or two on the wing. The species is very common this season in Franconia, — where it was extremely scarce a year ago, — and I was pleased at the summit when a lady standing near me remarked to her husband, "Why, that is the note we have been hearing so continually at the Rangeleys." It was so incessant there, she told me, as to be almost a trouble. Let us hope that this autumnal abundance in New Hampshire foreshadows a nuthatch winter in Massachusetts.

The all but total absence of birds at the summit was a most striking thing. It helped greatly to intensify the loneliness and the silence; that wonderful mountain silence — no leaf to rustle, no brook to murmur, no bird to sing — which, wherever I walked, I was always stopping to listen to. I should love to praise it, but language for such a purpose would need to be found on the spot, the stillness itself suggesting the words; and I came down from the summit more than a week ago. It must have been, I think, something like that apocalyptic "silence in heaven."

As for the birds, I should have felt their absence more disagreeably but for the fact that I had a novel and absorbing occupation with which to enliven my walks, and even to beguile effectually what otherwise might have been the

idle odds and ends of the day. For the nonce I had turned entomological collector. My search was for rare Alpine insects. Not that I knew anything about them; it would have been all one to me if most of what I saw had been created out of nothing the day before; but I was in learned company and needed no science of my own. My part was to carry a "cyanide bottle" and put into it any beetle, moth, fly, or other insect — ants and spiders excepted — on which I could lay my ignorant fingers. The possessor of the learning — enough and to spare for the two of us — has made many collecting visits to the summit; her list of Mount Washington species numbers more than sixteen hundred, if I remember the figures correctly, and no inconsiderable proportion of them are honored with her name. A proud lot they would be, if they knew it. But the end is not yet; there are many winged mountaineers still to be pinned, and in the prosecution of such an enterprise, so she gave me to understand, two bottles are better than one, no matter who carries the second one. Her language was rather encouraging than complimentary, it might have seemed, but I did not mind; and for seven days I was never without a bottle about my person except when I lay in bed.

If I went down to the Lakes of the Clouds,

for example, the poison-bottle went with me; and the looker-on, had there been one, — as luckily there was n't, — might have seen me on my knees, with hands outstretched over the water, struggling to snatch from the surface a poor, unhappy "skater," or a "lucky-bug" (it really was lucky, for it got away while the skater perished), as a possible prize for my lady's cork-lined box. On all my jaunts down the carriage-road (and they were many, longer or shorter, that route offering the readiest means of escape from the frequent summit-capping cloud) the same scientific vial was my companion. If a grasshopper jumped (not the common one with banded legs, of which I saw a superfluity, but a handsome, rare-looking green fellow, making me think of Leigh Hunt's "green little vaulter in the sunny grass"), I stole murderously after him, and with a reckless clutch at the stunted bush on which he had settled I gathered him in and put him to sleep. (This was well done, for he was really of a wingless Alpine species, and only my employer's third specimen of his kind.) If a "daddy-long-legs," prayerless friend of my childhood, crawled across the way, he, too, hapless creature, with legs so superfluously numerous and elongated that he could not hurry, even to save his life,

fell a victim to my uninstructed zeal. He died easily, for all his undevout habits, but the sacrifice was useless. He proved to be no longer among the entomologist's desiderata, though he also is Alpine, and it is not many years since she herself discovered him here, an insect till then unregistered by human science.

All caterpillars I was bidden to bring in alive; and so, of course, I did, rolling them up in scraps of soft paper and committing them tenderly to a pocket. My chief business, however, after I had breathed the air, eaten my fill of mountain blueberries ("Happy," said I, "is the mouth that feeds on such manna"), and looked my fill at the northern peaks, — for I was not employed by the day, but by the piece, and could steal an hour to myself now and then with a clear conscience, — my principal occupation, I say, was to pry under the boulders for beetles. "Leave no stone unturned," the entomologist had said, with her fine gift of laconic quotation; but she could not have intended the commission to be taken literally. The stones were too many, and human existence is too brief. She meant no more than that I should use a reasonable diligence; and so much I surely did, till the ends of my fingers were in danger of being skinned alive. Down on all fours I got, lifted a

stone quickly, fastened an eagle eye upon the exposed hollow, and if a dark object, no matter how small or how large, was seen to be scurrying to its burrow, I thrust my fingers into the dirt in frantic efforts to seize it. I knew not which were common and which rare; my only course was to let none escape. But many were too swift for me, with all my efforts, and of all that I captured in this manner I am not sure that one was "worth mounting." I quote those last two words partly by way of emphasis. They stood for the lowest round in the ladder of my entomological ambition. What I most of all desired was to discover a new species; next I coveted a species new to New England; after that a species new to Mount Washington; and last of all a specimen worth saving, or, as my employer said, "worth mounting" — in short, worth a pin.

My most productive field, like her own, was about the front of the hotel itself. In warm afternoons flies, beetles, moths and what not are known to drop out of the invisible, from nobody can tell where, upon the windows or the white clapboards of the house. Here, not once, but with something like regularity, insects have been captured, the like of which have never been seen elsewhere except in the West Indies or Mexico,

in Greenland or among the Rocky Mountains. How such wanderers come, and why, are among the things that no man knoweth. Enough that they are known to come. And who could tell but one might have come for me? Here, at all events, was my golden opportunity. Let me not miss it. If by chance, therefore, the lady herself stepped inside for a minute or two, I hastened to take her place. Tourists by the dozen might be watching me curiously, or even derisively, my equanimity was undisturbed. Science is a shield. Vial in hand (my *vade-mecum* I called it, Latin being in the air), I walked along the platform, with my eyes upon the glass and the paint, and woe to the unlucky insect that was there taking the sun. The yawning mouth of a bottle was clapped over him, the world swam before his eyes, and long before he knew it he was on his way to be a specimen. Strange things happen to insects, though they are not the only ones who have found perdition in a bottle.

Sometimes I climbed the stairs to the upper floors of the observatory. No matter how high I went, the higher the better. In the warm hours of the day the air at the very top was almost a cloud of tiny wings. "Excelsior" is the insects' watchword. Once, in the upper room, I bottled carelessly a small black-and-white moth. Its

appearance was ordinary enough; no doubt it was common; but it was an insect, and hit or miss I took it in. And in due course it went into the entomologist's hands with the rest of the catch. She emptied the vial, and passed an unexciting comment or two upon the few flies and beetles it contained; perhaps she remarked that one of them might be worth mounting — I do not remember precisely; it was a way she had of egging me on; but the next morning she said: "You did n't tell me anything about the lovely moth you took yesterday." I was obliged to stop and think. "Oh, that little black-and-white thing," I said. Yes, that was the one — "new to the summit." If I was not proud, then pride does not dwell in earthly minds. This, I confide, was not my only contribution to the fauna of our highest New England mountain; I seem to remember a short-winged beetle also; but the moth, being in the Lepidoptera, is my especial glory. I wish I could recall its name, that I might print it here for the reading of future generations.

With such pursuits did I improve the spare hours of my Mount Washington week. I have no thought of boasting. At least I would not seem to do so. It was little enough that I accomplished, or could hope to accomplish, hampered

as I was by my ignorance. Probably I shall never have a beetle, much less a moth, named after me; but with that precious black-and-white rarity in mind I feel that even in the way of entomology I have not lived altogether in vain.

Scientific studies apart, the best hours of the week (after some spent along the carriage-road, resting here and there upon a boulder to enjoy the magnificent, ever-shifting prospect, and some — not hours, alas, but minutes — spent in eating the ambrosial, banana-savored, soul-satisfying berries of *Vaccinium cæspitosum*) — my best hours, I say, were perhaps those of a certain wonderful evening. The air was warm, no breath stirring, the sky clear, and the half world below us, as we walked the hotel platform, lay covered with white clouds, on which the full moon was shining. The stillness, the mildness, the brightness, the sense of elevation, and the bewitching, unearthly scene, all this was like an evening in fairyland. For the time being, it is to be feared, even the rarest of moths would have seemed a matter of secondary importance. Such is the power of beauty. So truly was it born to make other things forgotten.

MOUNTAIN-TOP AND VALLEY

NOTHING heightens appreciation like a contrast. After a week at the summit of Mount Washington, where we lived in the clouds and above them, in a world above the world, we returned to the lowlands. The afternoon was sultry, and before the descent was half accomplished — by the train — we wished ourselves back again on the heights. How can men live in such an atmosphere, we asked each other; so stifling, so depressing, so wanting in all the elements of vitality. Our condition seemed like that of fishes out of water, and we began to think of angling as a cruel sport. It grieved us to see the trees growing taller. Even the laughing young Ammonoosuc was looked upon with indifference. "I wish I were back," said one; and the other responded, "So do I."

At Fabyan's the crowd surged about us like a sea. Baggage must be found and checked, our train was waiting, and the baggage-master, true railway "official" that he was, was not to be hastened. His steps were all taken by rule, and every movement of his hands was set to slow

music. When he spoke, which was seldom, it was in a muffled voice and with funereal moderation. In the midst of all that bustle he was calm —

"Calm as to suit a calmer grief."

You might say what you pleased to him, be urgently argumentative, or plaintive even to wheedling, it was all one. Your eloquence was wasted. It was like nudging a graven image, or crying haste in the ear of Death. Not a feature of his countenance altered, not a muscle quickened. Who ever knew the hands of a clock to accelerate their pace in response to human impatience? Time and tide — and a baggage-master — hurry for no man.

"Two trunks for Bethlehem," you say. No answer. By and by, meekly insistent, and thinking that by this time your turn must surely have come, you repeat the words. No answer. But the man is taking down checks from their peg, and in due time, stepping as to the measure of a dirge, he marches with them down the platform. "These are mine," you say, keeping an uneasy pace or two in advance and pointing to the trunks on the truck. No answer — not so much as a look. Nor is there need of any. You are silenced. That implacable manner carries all before it. You could not speak again, even to

claim your soul. But finally the man himself speaks. You are relieved to know he can. He is addressing you. The minute hand is at twelve and the clock strikes. "These are yours?" he asks. You reply in the affirmative, as best you are able. "For Bethlehem?" he asks, and you answer "Yes." And then, after one more set of machine-like motions, the mighty work is accomplished. The checks are yours. Fortunately, the train has not yet pulled away, though it is past the time, and at the last moment you see the trunks on board.

Trifles like these would have been as nothing, of course, to ordinary travelers; but to us, innocent Carthusians, fresh from the unearthly quiet of a mountain-top, they were little short of tragical. And how intolerably hot and close the car was! Things were growing worse and worse with us. Should we live to reach Bethlehem, with nothing but this blast out of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace in our nostrils? Why had we not remained where existence was not a struggle, but a dream of pleasure; where the air had not to be gasped for, but came of itself to be sweetly inhaled? Nevertheless, we survived the passage, — the conductor helping to pass the time by stopping in the aisle to make inquiries touching a little flock of puzzling birds, crossbills, perhaps, lately seen

in his apple orchard, — and at Bethlehem the carriage awaited us. This was a welcome change, but even so we still found it difficult to draw breath; and when the horses started, what a dust they set flying! Truly, between the heat and the drought, this lower world was in an evil case. It was a road of sighs all the six miles to Franconia.

Once there, however, and supper eaten, I stepped out upon the piazza and looked westward. Venus was bright just above the near horizon (the *near* horizon!), and against the sunset sky stood a line of low woods, with detached pine trees towering over the rest. And in that sight I discovered anew, all in a moment, the charm of this valley world. I had seen nothing like this from the mountain-top. Yes, good as the summit prospect was, this was in some respects better. If that was more magnificent, more soul-expanding, this was more home-felt and beautiful. And as I looked and looked, while the light faded out of the sky, I was conscious of a new contentment. Mountain-tops for visits, I said, and may I enjoy them often; but the valley to live in.

The next morning I was no sooner abroad than this happy impression was renewed and deepened. It was a comfort to the feet to be

going neither uphill nor downhill, and it rested the eyes to be looking not at remote peaks and dimly discovered sheets of water, but into green branches so near that the leaves could be seen, and the blue sky through them. How sweetly the ripple of the brook came to my ears as it ran over its stony bed just beyond the velvety, smooth meadow! And the cawing of a dozen or two of crows, who were talking politics among the pines on the hillside, affected me most agreeably. There was something of real neighborliness about it. I would gladly have taken a hand in the discussion, if they would have let me. When a song sparrow started out of the hedge at my elbow it gave me a start of surprise. I had become so unused to such movements! A robin's sudden cackle I thought almost the sweetest of music; the careless warble of a bluebird was nothing less than a voice from heaven; and a squirrel sputtering defiance from the stone wall set me laughing with pleasure. None of these sounds, nor anything akin to them, was to be heard on the desolate, boulder-covered top of Mount Washington.

Now the trees interlaced their branches over my head. Nothing could be prettier; and the effect was so novel! I stopped short to admire it. And anon, as the road made a little ascent,

scarcely noticeable to one fresh from the steepness of a mountain cone, I found myself gazing down upon one of the most engaging scenes in the world; a sequestered valley farm, thrifty-looking, snugly kept, nestled among low hills, with a mountain river winding along the farther side of it, between the meadow and the woodland, now lost to sight, now shining in the sun. I had known the place for years, as I had known the worthy man who owns it; and I had looked at it many times from this very point; but I had never seen it till this morning. A pleasant thing it is when an old picture or an old poem, or both in one, is thus made new. If our eyes could but oftener be anointed!

The softness of the meadow, freshly sprung after the summer mowing, the glistening of the corn leaves, the narrow road, — a brown ribbon laid upon the green carpet, — that runs to the door and stops (for nothing goes by — nothing but the river, the clouds, and the birds), the shade trees clustered lovingly about the house, the whole pastoral scene, I saw it all with the vision of one who had been looking at a vaguely defined, far-away world, over which the eye wandered as the dove wandered over the face of the waters, and now had come suddenly in sight of home.

Yes, distance is a good painter, but nearness

is a better one. So I felt for the time being, at all events, falling in with the mood of the hour; for it is well that moods alter, as it is well that the earth goes round the sun and season gives place to season. Man was not made to see one kind of beauty, or to believe in one kind of goodness. The whole world is hid in his heart. All things are his. The small and the great, the near and the far, light and darkness, good and evil, the intimacies of home and the isolations of infinite space, all are parts of the Creator's work, and equally parts of the creature's inheritance.

For to-day, then, I praise the valley. I am for having the hills close about me, rather than afar off and far below. I like to see the trees, and the leaves on them, rather than leagues on leagues of barely discernible forest; and a lonely pool of still water at my feet, with alders reflected in it, is more in my eyes than Lake Umbagog itself, hardly better than a blur upon the landscape, fifty miles away. To-morrow I may feel differently, but for to-day let me listen to the breeze in the pine branches and the brook pattering over stones, rather than to the eternal silences of the bare mountain-top and the brooding sky.

IN THE MOUNT LAFAYETTE FOREST

It is one of the cool mornings that descend rather suddenly upon our White Mountain country with the coming of autumn; cool mornings that are liable to be followed by warm days. I was in doubt how to dress as I set out, and for the first mile or two almost regretted that I had not taken an extra garment. Then all at once the sun broke through the clouds, and even the one coat became superfluous and was thrown over my arm. This state of things lasted till I had crossed the golf links and entered the woods. At that point the sun withdrew his shining, and now, between the clouds and the shadow and dampness of the forest, I have put on my coat again and buttoned it up; and what counts for more, I am driven to walk less slowly than one would always prefer to do in such a place.

A fresh breeze stirs the tree-tops, so that I am not without music, let the birds be as silent as they will. Nearly or quite the only voice I have so far heard was that of an unseen Maryland yellow-throat, some distance back, who sprang into the air and delivered himself of a song with

variations, all in his most rapturous June manner. Why the fellow should have been in anything like an ecstasy at that precise moment is quite beyond my guessing. Possibly it would be equally beyond his, if he were to stop to think about it. Some sudden stirring of memory, perhaps. Natural beings seldom know just why they are happy. I recall the fact, unthought of till now, that I have not heard a yellow-throat sing before for several weeks, though I have seen the birds often. They are among the late stayers, and at this season have a more or less lonesome look, being commonly found not as members of a flock or family, after the manner of autumnal warblers in general, but here and there one, dodging about in a roadside thicket, or peeping out curiously at a casual passer-by.

Just as I am remarking upon the unusual silence my ear catches in the far distance the song of a white-throated sparrow. So very far off it is that the sound barely reaches me. Indeed, I do not so much hear it as become vaguely conscious that I should hear it if the bird were ever so little nearer. Yet I am sure he sang — as sure as if I had seen him. Probably experienced readers will divine what I mean, although I seem unable to express it.

The road is bordered with the dead tops of

trees, thrown there in heaps by the road-makers. They form an unsightly hedge, which birds of various kinds resort to for cover. At this minute two winter wrens, pert-looking, bob-tailed things, scold at me out of it. My passing is a trespass, they consider, and they tell me so with emphasis. For the sake of stirring them up to protest even more vigorously (such an eloquent gesticulatory manner as they have), I stand still and squeak to them. Few birds can be quiet under such insults; and the winter wren is not one of them. There is nothing phlegmatic about his disposition. He is like some beings of a higher class: it takes very little to set him in a flutter. So I squeak and squeak, and the pair vociferate *tut, tut*, till I have had enough and go on my way laughing. Touchy people were made for teasing.

I have hardly started before a hairy woodpecker's sharp signal is heard, and within a minute a sapsucker on the opposite side of the way utters a snarling note, which by a slight effort of the imagination might be taken for the voice of an angry cat. To my ear it is not in the smallest degree woodpeckerish. I see the bird a moment later as he flies across the road.

In a mountain-side forest like this, near the mountain's foot, the traveler, if he is not climbing the slope but crossing it transversely, is cer-

tain to come now and then upon a brook. I am on the edge of one now, and as the sun at this moment shines out between two clouds I stand still to enjoy the warmth while it lasts, and at the same time to hear the singing of the water. Good music, I call it, and fear no contradiction. It has the quality of some of the best verse — liquidity. It is broken unevenly into syllables, yet it is true to the beat, and it flows. In short, it is smooth, yet not too smooth — with the smoothness of water, not of oil. It speaks to every boulder as it passes. I wish my ear were more at home in the language.

There is seldom a minute when, if I pause to listen, I cannot hear from one direction or another the quaint, homely, twangy, countryfied, yet to me always agreeable voice of Canadian nuthatches. At frequent intervals one or two come near enough so that I see them creeping about over the trees, bodies bent, heads down, always in search of a mouthful, yet keeping up, every one, his share of the universal chorus. As well as I can judge, all the evergreen forests of this Northern country are now alive with these pretty creatures; for they really are pretty. In fact, there are few forest birds for whom I cherish a kindlier feeling. It is too bad they do not summer in our Massachusetts woods, though pos-

sibly I should care less for them if they made themselves neighborly the whole year long, like their relatives, the white-breasts.

A goldfinch is passing far above, dropping music as he goes. He is one of the high-fliers. Wherever you may happen to be, at the summit of Mount Washington or where not, you will pretty often hear his sweet voice as he wanders under the sky, dipping and rising, dipping and rising, voice and wing keeping step together.

Here and there one or two clouded-sulphur butterflies (Philodice) take wing as I disturb them. They have been most extraordinarily abundant of late. A fortnight ago we drove for almost a whole forenoon through clouds of them, bunches of twenty or more constantly rising from damp spots of earth by the wayside; and in a meadow all bespangled with purple asters they were so thick as almost to conceal the flowers. Twinkling in the sunlight, they looked a thousand times more like stars than the asters themselves. Even the entomologists of the valley, in whose company I was driving, had never seen the like. Here in this shaded road such lovers of the sun are naturally less numerous. In truth, the wonder is that they should be here at all. And yet the wonder is not so very great; they wander at their own will, and the will of the wind. Only

last week, I am told, in the midst of a driving snowstorm, one took shelter in the Summit House on Mount Washington. After all, a butterfly is not exactly a fool; it knows enough to go into the house when it snows.

Now I come upon a few snowbirds, hopping in silence about the twigs of a brush-heap, snapping their tails nervously, as if proud to show the white feather; and shortly beyond are two or three white-throated sparrows. They also are silent. Perhaps they perceive that a red squirrel close by is talking enough for them and himself too. He says a good many things, some of which I feel sure would be highly interesting to a competent listener. Among forest folk, as among church folk, the rule is, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." As for me, I can only lament my deficiency. A solitary vireo is chattering sweetly (with him music is its own reward), and all the while, whoever else speaks or keeps silence, the nuthatch chorus goes on. Taking New England together, we may safely say that just at present hundreds of thousands, yea, millions of *ank-anks* go up to heaven every minute of every day, from sunrise to sunset.

I walk but a few rods farther before I am delighted by the sight of four winter wrens in an overturned tree-top. In my experience it is some-

thing extremely out of the common course to see so many together, and — as I did with the two a quarter of a mile back — I work upon this quartet's sensibilities till they fairly dance with curiosity and indignation. I wonder if they are a family group.

I bethink myself that I am saying nothing about the forest itself. Its presence is felt rather than seen, a grateful solemnity; but the temperature will not suffer me to sit down and enjoy it as a Christian should. And just here I emerge into territory over which a fire has swept within a few years. Under these dead trees I get the sun again, and can go slowly. Nothing in the way of physical comfort is more grateful than warmth after coolness, unless it be coolness after warmth. A pine siskin calls, the first for some weeks, and another hairy woodpecker shows himself. Not a warbler has been seen since I entered the woods. Of the flycatchers, too, — olive-sides and wood pewees, — which were always conspicuous in this burning in August and early September, there is neither sight nor sound. Their season is done. Crossbill notes lead me to look upward, and I see four birds flying past. Restless, nomadic souls! Like the saints, they have "no continuing city."

Another half-mile in the leafy forest, and I

reach the foot of Echo Lake, where as I pass a cluster of balsam firs I am saluted by the busy, hurried calls of golden-crowned kinglets. A wren is here also, irritable as ever, and hearing a chickadee's voice, I whistle and chirp to him. If I can set him to scolding, all the birds in the neighborhood will flock this way to ascertain what the trouble is. The device works to a charm; in half a minute the excitement is intense. Nuthatches, white-throats, chickadees, kinglets, and wren, all take a hand in vituperating the intruder, and a youthful redstart comes from the opposite side of the way to satisfy his more gentle curiosity. One creature, strangely enough, remains neutral: a red squirrel, who sits on end at the top of a stump and gazes at me in silence. He holds one hand upon his heart, like an opera singer, and looks and looks. "You sentimental goose!" I say; "who taught you that trick?" and I laugh at him and pass on. This is near the corner of the old Notch road, and as I round it and face the cold northerly wind I button my coat about me and start homeward at a quicker pace.

ON BALD MOUNTAIN

"FOUR inches of snow at the Profile House:" such was the word brought to us at the breakfast table, the driver of the "stage" having communicated the intelligence as he passed the hotel an hour or two earlier. We were not surprised. It rained in Franconia night before last, and yesterday, when the clouds now and then lifted a little, the sides of the mountains were seen to be white. This morning (October 7), although even the lower slopes were veiled, the day promised well, and at the first minute I set out for the Notch.

It was evident almost immediately that at some time within the last forty-eight hours there had been a great influx of migrating birds. Song sparrows, white-throated sparrows, snowbirds, bluebirds, and myrtle warblers were in extraordinary force. Soon I began to hear the wrennish calls of ruby-crowned kinglets, — which have been very scarce hitherto, — and presently more than one was heard rehearsing its pretty song. What with bluebird voices, song sparrows' warblings (no set tune, but

"continuous melody"), the cackle of robins, and the croaking of rusty blackbirds, the air was loud. To these travelers, as to me, the weather seemed to be changing for the better, though the sun did not yet show itself, and finding themselves in so delectable a valley, they were in exuberant spirits.

Just above the Profile House farm the road took me into a flock of birds that proved to be the better part of half a mile in length. The wayside hedges were literally in a flutter, snowbirds being the most abundant, I think, with white-throats and myrtle warblers not far behind. Hermit thrushes, winter wrens, chipping sparrows, song sparrows, and ruby-crowns were continually in sight, and an unseen purple finch was practicing niggardly, disconnected, vireo-like phrases, as the manner of his kind is in the autumnal season.

Then, when the older forest was reached, there came an interval of silence, broken at last by the distant, or distant-seeming, voice of a red-breasted nuthatch and the cheerful notes of chickadees. Soon two hermits showed themselves, facing me on a low perch, and lifting their tails solemnly in response to my chirping; and not far away were a winter wren or two, and a flock of white-throats and snowbirds. I

had never seen the dear old road birdier, even in May, though of course I had often seen the number of species very much larger.

At the height of land I came upon the first snow, a ragged fringe left on the shady side of the way. I made a snowball, for the sake of doing it (or, as I said to myself, suiting the boyish act with a boyish word, "for greens"), and decided all at once not to go down into the Notch, but up to the top of Bald Mountain. From that point, if the sky cleared, as I felt hopeful it would, there would be sights worth remembering.

The mountain is only a little one, but it is steep enough — the upper half, at all events — to give the eager pedestrian a puff for his money. For myself, I had time to spare, and, fortunately or unfortunately, had been over the path too often to be subject to the state of mind (I know it well) which we may characterize as climbers' impatience. Unless something unforeseen should happen, the summit would wait for me. Halfway up, also, a flock of blue jays, five or six at least, who were holding a long and mysterious confabulation close by the path, afforded me a comfortable breathing spell. For a moment I suspected the presence of an owl, against whom the rascals were plotting mis-

chief; but their voices were much of the time too soft, too intimate-sounding, too lacking in belligerency. Some of the birds might even have been communing with themselves. Their whole behavior had an air of preternatural gravity and cunning, and their remarks, whatever the purport of them, were in the highest degree varied. One fellow was a masterly performer upon the bones (jay scholars will understand what I mean, and I should despair of explaining myself in a few words to any one else), while another furnished me with a genuine surprise by whistling again and again in the manner of a red-tailed hawk.

Well, the conspirators dispersed, the solitary climber pocketed his curiosity, and in a few minutes longer his feet were at the top. The rocky cone of Lafayette was still densely capped, but under the fringed edges of the cloud there was plenty of snow in sight. All the upper slopes of Kinsman, Cannon, and Lafayette were covered with it, except that the deciduous trees (broad patches of yellow) stood bare. Apparently the snow had stuck only upon the evergreens, and the effect at this distance was very striking, the white over the green producing a beautiful gray. I could never have imagined it. The hotel and its cottages, nestled

between the mountains, all had white roofs, but the landscape as a whole was anything but wintry. Everywhere below me the great forest still showed an abundance of bright hues, — red, yellow, and russet, — a piece of glorious pageantry, though many shades less brilliant than I had seen it two days before.

So I am saying to myself when suddenly I look upward, and behold, the cap is lifted from Lafayette, and the mountain-top is clear white, shining in the sunlight against the blue sky; a vision, it seems; something not of this world; splendor immaculate, unearthly, unspeakable. I feel like shouting, or tell myself that I do; but for some reason I keep silence. Clouds still hang about the mountains, their shapes altering from glory to glory with every minute. Now a band lies clean across Lafayette, immediately below the cone, detaching the white mass from everything underneath, and leaving it, as it were, floating in the air.

A sharp-shinned hawk sails past me, nuthatches call from the valley woods, a snowbird perches on a dwarf spruce at my elbow, a red squirrel breaks into sudden spluttering, and then, with hands uplifted, sits silent and motionless. I mention these details, but they are nothing. What I really see and feel is the world I am liv-

ing in: the sunshine, the stillness, the temperate airs, the bright encircling forest, in which my little hilltop is cradled, and the white peak yonder in the sky. The snow lends it lightness, airiness, buoyancy. As I said just now, it seems almost to float in the ether.

I remained with this beauty for an hour, divided at the last between the luminous, snowy peak above me and the soft — ineffably soft — world of leafy tree-tops below. Then, as I had done only day before yesterday, I bade the place good-by. Probably I should not come this way again till next summer, at the soonest. Good-by, old mountain. Good-by, old woods. No doubt you have many worthier lovers, but let me be counted as one of the faithful.

I was still on the cone, making my way downward, when a grouse drummed and in a minute or two repeated himself. The sound struck me as curiously wanting in resonance, as if the log were water-soaked (though I do not believe he was striking one), or his breast not fully inflated. Perhaps he was a young fellow, a new hand with the drumsticks, and so excusable. Certainly the difficulty lay not in the matter of distance, for between two of the performances I turned a sharp corner, effectively triangulating the bird, and it was impossible that he should be more than a few

yards away. On all sides the little nuthatches were calling to each other in their quaint childish treble. I love to hear them, and the goldcrests also; but here, as on the heights above, the birds were less than the forest. I was in a susceptible mood, I suppose. The mere sight of the tall, straight trunks, with the lights and shadows on them, gave me a pleasure indescribable. Though the friend who had been my walking companion for a week past (and no man could wish a better one) is sure to read this column, I cannot refrain from saying that solitariness has its merciful alleviations. I was no longer tempted to babble, and the wise old trees took their turn at talking. If I could only repeat what they said!

BIRDS AND BRIGHT LEAVES

AFTER the red maple trees and the yellow birches are mostly bare, and the greater part of the sugar groves have passed the zenith of their brilliancy, then the poplars come to the rescue. The hills are all at once bright again with a second crop of color, an aftermath of splendid sun-bright yellow. I knew nothing about this beforehand, and am delighted over the discovery. From my Franconia window I am looking at as pretty an autumnal wood as any man need wish to see, and it is a wood the seasonable glories of which were ended, I thought, more than a week ago. As I look at it I feel sorry for my last week's companion, who went home too soon. Since his departure the days have been outdoing one another in the softness of their airs and the beauty of their lights. Mother Earth has been in her most amiable mood. Nothing is too good for her children. I have never seen fairer weather; though some, I dare say, might criticise it as a few degrees too warm. It is hard, I admit, for a walker to keep a coat on his back, far along as the season is getting, when the sun wrestles with him for it.

An interesting thing to me has been the tardy brightening of individual maple trees. It is one more manifestation, I assume, of Nature's gift of versatility, her faculty of variation, to which, all but universal as it is, scientific men attribute so much potency in the evolving of so-called species. What I notice just now is that, as some bushes and trees mature their fruit later than others of the same kind, living apparently under the same conditions, so some maple trees are a week or two behind their immediate neighbors in ripening their foliage. I have passed within a day or two both sugar maples and red maples that were just donning their gay robes. Well done, I am moved to say, as my eye lights on them. They and the poplars, together with certain extensive maple groves on the higher levels, still keep the world arrayed in a really barbaric splendor. Two weeks ago I should have prophesied that before this time the landscape would be stripped for winter; and so it would have been, perhaps, if a cold storm had supervened instead of this period of summery brightness and calm. Great is weather. There is nothing like it. It makes a man — and a tree, too, for aught I know — glad to be alive.

That it makes the birds happy is beyond dispute. You can see it with half an eye. Many of

them are gone, it is true, but many others are left; and wherever you take your walk you may have joy of them. You will need to be blind and deaf, or of a hopelessly sour temper, not to catch a little of their cheeriness. Three days ago (it was an anniversary with me, and I was early abroad) I went into the kitchen garden before breakfast, as I have been doing frequently of late, to see what birds might be there. For a month and more, as the coarse grasses and weeds have ripened their crop (the garden, luckily for me, having been allowed to go untended), the place has been a favorite resort of sparrows. There I saw the Lincoln finches in their time, — on September 5 and subsequently, — and there for a fortnight past I have always been able to begin the day with a few white-crowns.

Well, on the morning in question one of the first things I heard was a brief, uncharacteristic, autumnal-sounding ditty which, being too short for a song sparrow's work, I at once credited to a white-crown; and, to be sure, when I looked that way, there the bird stood on a top stone of the wall, a young fellow, not yet "crowned," practicing his first musical exercises. The morning was cool, — the ground had stiffened overnight, — and every time he opened his mouth to sing, a tiny cloud of vapor could be seen rising

from it. It was visible music. Again and again I watched him. The dear little chorister! Nobody's birthday was ever more prettily honored. He "sang to my eye" indeed — in a daintily literal sense such as the poet never thought of. I wonder if any one, anywhere, ever saw and heard the like.

The white-crowns have been surprisingly musical (the weather, no doubt, being a provocation), but I have not once heard their spring song, or anything which to my ear — none too well accustomed to it — has seemed to bear any relation thereto. Song sparrows, on the other hand, while mostly contenting themselves with incoherent, *sotto-voce* twitterings, have now and then — almost daily, I think — varied the programme with more or less successful attempts at a fuller-voiced and more formal melody. As for the vesper sparrows, they have mainly kept silence, but on one or two bright mornings have sung as sweetly as ever they do in May. Indeed, I might truthfully say more than that; for at this season, when all bright things are taking leave, a strain of wild music is more grateful to the ear than by any possibility it can be when every newly green bush is part of the universal choir gallery.

To us who have been in the habit of coming to this valley in bright-leaf time nothing is more

characteristic, as nothing is more welcome, than the continual familiar presence of bluebirds. This year, because I have stayed later than usual, it may be, they have seemed uncommonly abundant. Their voices are sure to be among the first to be heard as I step out of the door in the morning, and wherever I walk — in the open country — I find myself surrounded at frequent intervals by a larger or smaller flock. Two days ago I counted forty in sight at once; and a bunch of forty bluebirds — well, there may be pleasanter sights for a bird-lover (a flock of sixty, for example), but it is a sight to raise low spirits, especially for a man who remembers the time — after a cruel winter — when the vision of a single bird was accepted by all of us as an event to talk about.

Myrtle warblers (yellow-rumps) are still more numerous, and if a bluebird quits a perch and takes wing it is almost an even chance that a yellow-rump, who has been sitting near at hand, waiting for this to happen, will be seen dashing in pursuit. You may go down the village street and watch the trick repeated half a dozen times within half a mile. To my walking companion and myself the sight has come to be part of a Franconia autumn. If you are pretty close to the birds you may hear a bill snapping (the warbler's, I think), as if in anger, but on the whole I am

inclined to believe that the thing is no more than an innocent, though one-sided, game of tag. All young creatures must have something to play with, somebody to make game of. So it is with yellow-rumps, I dare say; but why should they so universally pitch upon the inoffensive bluebird, I should like to know. It is to be added, however, to make the story truthful, that if there are no bluebirds handy, the warblers take it out by a free chasing of each other. To watch them, one would think that life, by their apprehension of it, were all a holiday.

And while I am talking of bluebirds I ought to mention their habit of hanging about bird boxes in these last days of their Northern season. Only this forenoon, since the foregoing paragraphs were written, I passed a box perched upon a pole beside a house, and at least six bluebirds were sitting upon its platform, or investigating its different apartments. Sometimes a pair (so they looked, one bright colored, the other dull) sat side by side before a door, like married lovers. Sometimes one would go inside, sometimes both, while out of the next door another bird would be peeping. The box was very unlikely to have been their home; the countryside is overrun with bluebirds, too many by half to have summered hereabout; but evidently the sight of it

had suggested family pleasures. Perhaps they were living over the past, perhaps forecasting the future. Bluebirds have their full share of sentiment, or both voice and behavior are rank deceivers. Concerning this aspect of the case, however, the frivolous yellow-rumps cared not a farthing. They sat in a small apple tree conveniently near, and as often as a bluebird ventured upon the wing, one or two of them started instantly in pursuit. If he alighted upon a fence post, down they dropped upon the next rail and waited for him to make another sally. Once I heard a bluebird utter a pretty sharp note of remonstrance, but that, we may guess, only made the fun the greater. Birds will be birds.

My morning stroll (it is October 13, my last day in Franconia) showed me, in addition to the birds already named, one lonesome-mannered hermit thrush, a few robins, two or three ruby-crowned kinglets, one of them running over with his musical *twittity, twittity, twittity*, a single yellow palm warbler (this and the myrtle have been the only warblers of the month), a red crossbill, going somewhere, as usual, and leaving word behind him as he went, a small flock of pine siskins, a strangely few song sparrows, one vesper sparrow, one white-crown, a multitude of snowbirds, a purple finch or two, a goldfinch, and a

grouse, with the inevitable crows, jays, chickadees, and red-breasted nuthatches. Had my walk been longer and into a more varied country, I should have found gold-crested kinglets, winter wrens, brown creepers, titlarks (perhaps), white-throated sparrows, field sparrows, chippers, tree sparrows (probably), and three or four kinds of woodpeckers.

And speaking of woodpeckers, I must allow myself to boast that within the last few days I have had exceptional luck with the big fellow of them all, known in books as the pileated. On the 9th I saw one and heard the halloo of another, and on the 11th I saw two (together) and heard a third. One of those seen on the 11th shouted at full length, and at the top of his voice while flying.

The pileated woodpecker is a splendid bird. A pity he cannot find himself at home in our Massachusetts country. To see him here in New Hampshire one might imagine that he belonged with the mountains and would be homesick in other company; but if you would see him oftener than anywhere else, you may go to a land where there is scarcely so much as a hillock — to the peninsula of Florida. There or here, he is a great bird. The brightest maple leaf that ever took color was not so bright as his crest.

FLORIDA

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF MIAMI

It is Sunday, the 19th of January. A week ago I was sitting before a fire, watching the snow fall outside, in winter-bound Massachusetts. This forenoon I am reclining in the shade of a cocoanut palm, looking across the smooth blue waters of Biscayne Bay to a line of woods, I know not how many miles distant, broken in the midst by a narrow cut or inlet (Norris Cut, a passer-by tells me it is called), through which is to be seen the open Atlantic. The air is motionless, the sky cloudless, the temperature ideal. "This is the day the Lord hath made," I repeat to myself. He has seldom done better.

I left Boston Monday morning, spent that night and the next day in Washington, slept in St. Augustine Wednesday night, and on Thursday took the long, all-day ride down the east coast of Florida, past miles on miles of orange groves and pineapple plantations, to the terminus of the railroad, the new and flourishing city of Miami.

My visit, it must be owned, began rather inauspiciously. It was nobody's fault, of course,

but the "magic city" did not put its best foot forward. Friday morning the mercury stood at forty-five, and although the day was abundantly warm out of doors, — so warm that a walker naturally took off his coat, — an oil stove proved a comfort at nightfall. In short, the day was exactly like a White Mountain day in late September, hot in the middle and cool at both ends. Yesterday, however, was a piece of Massachusetts June, while this morning is so perfect that every one, visitor or resident, passes comments upon it. Perfection of any kind is a rare and precious thing, — in this world, at least, — and though it be merely a bit of weather, it should never go unspoken of. So I say to myself as I lie in the shade, and look and breathe.

In truth, I can hardly feel it credible that I was in the midst of snowstorms less than a week ago. For a long two days winter has seemed a thing utterly past and forgotten. Only now and then it comes upon me, with the shock of unexpected news, that this is not summer, but January.

The bay, for some reason to me unknown, is almost without birds. The only one just now in sight is a cormorant pretty far offshore, diving and swimming by turns. I imagine him to be a loon till suddenly he takes wing, with outstretched

neck, and after a long flight comes to rest, not in the water, but at the top of a stake. Somewhere behind me a flicker is shouting as in springtime, and on one side a mockingbird is calling ("smacking" is the word that comes of itself to my pencil), and a blue-gray gnatcatcher utters now and then a fine, thread-like ejaculation.

The stillness is really a relief, even to my ornithological ears; for though they had been starved for two or three months in Massachusetts, they have been so dinned with bird voices for the last two days that a brief period of silence is grateful. The centre of the town, where I have taken up my abode, literally swarms with fish crows and boat-tailed grackles, every one trying, as it seems, to outdo its rivals in noisiness. I remember the day, eight or nine years ago, when in the flatwoods of New Smyrna I spent an hour of almost painful excitement in taking observations upon the first boat-tail I had ever seen. It would have been hard at that moment for me to imagine that so clever and interesting a bird could ever become a nuisance. Fortunately, both crow and grackle retire to roost early and are comparatively late risers; otherwise the people of Miami might be driven to violent measures, as against a plague. As things are, the birds have no fears. They alight

in the shade trees before the windows, or gather about the kitchen door, crows and blackbirds alike (and the male blackbirds, with their overgrown tails, are almost or quite as large as the crows), as fearless as so many English sparrows.

After them the abundant birds hereabout, so far as I have yet discovered, are buzzards, carrion crows (black vultures), blue jays, catbirds (which I have never seen half so plentiful), palm warblers, myrtle warblers, and blue-gray gnat-catchers. Less numerous, but still decidedly common, are flickers, red-bellied woodpeckers, mockingbirds, Florida yellow-throats, hummingbirds, ground doves, and phœbes. Day before yesterday a long procession of tree swallows straggled past me as I wandered along the bay shore, and in the same place a flock of masculine red-winged blackbirds were holding a vociferous mid-winter convention in a thicket of tall reeds. White-eyed vireos are well distributed, and sing as saucily as if the month were May instead of January. Solitary vireos are present likewise, but I have seen only one, and he was not yet in tune.

Out in the pine lands I came upon a single group of pine warblers and half a dozen bluebirds, both singing freely. What a voice the bluebird has! It does a Yankee's heart good to hear it. I have yet to see a robin or a chickadee.

All in all, notwithstanding the woods are alive with wings, there is surprisingly little music. The season of song is not yet come. Phœbes, for some reason, form a bright exception to the rule, and now and then a cardinal grosbeak whistles with a sweetness that beggars words. Twice, I think, I have heard a distant mockingbird singing, and yesterday, in front of the hotel, I stopped to watch a pair that seemed to be in what I should call a decidedly lyrical mood, though they were silent as dead men. They stood on the pavement a foot or so apart, and took turns in a very original and pretty kind of dance. One and then the other suddenly hopped straight upward for an inch or two, both feet at once. Between whiles they stood motionless, or sometimes one (always the same) moved a little away from its partner. Plainly they were much in earnest, and without question the ceremony, simple, and almost laughable, as it looked, had some deep and perfectly understood significance. Ritualism is not confined to churches. Everywhere the heart speaks by attitude and gesticulation.

A noble concert it will be when all these thousands of song birds recover their voices. May I be here to enjoy it. For the present I am contented to wait. It is sufficient just now to be in so strange a land in so lovely a season, with

acres of morning-glories and moon-flowers all about, roses and marigolds in the gardens, birds in every bush (not an English sparrow among them), airs gratefully cool from the sea, and bright summer weather. For a winter-killed Yankee, this is what old Omar would have called "Paradise enow."

– Jan 22 – Miami

A FROSTY MORNING

THERE is nothing like weather. It is man's comfort and his misery; more important still, perhaps, it is his prosperity and his ruin. Indeed, it has almost divine prerogatives. It wounds and it heals; it kills and it makes alive. And this, which in good degree is true everywhere, is especially true in a country like southern Florida, the Mecca at once of pleasure-seeking winter vacationers, health-seeking tourists, and livelihood-seeking settlers. For all these, Florida is what it is because of its climate, that is to say, its weather. Speak with whom you will, weather is the topic that naturally comes uppermost.

Yesterday (January 22) was one of the most delightful days imaginable; for a pedestrian, I mean to say. I know an insect collector, a gentle soul, little used to complaining against the order of the world, who pronounced it "horrid." For the successful prosecution of her industry there lacked a few degrees of warmth. Florida insects, it appears, are much less hardy than their Northern cousins, keeping indoors, and so out of the net, in temperature such as a Yankee butterfly

or beetle, thicker-skinned or thicker-blooded, would scorn to be afraid of. But if yesterday was perfect, to-day, by my reckoning, at least, has been finer still — perfection heaped upon perfection. Yet every one hereabout is more or less unhappy, and with more or less reason. In the night between these two perfect days an air from the North descended suddenly upon us, and the temperature took an alarming drop, some say to 38°, some to 31° — a drop which meant discomfort to all, and disaster to many. When I put my head out of doors at seven o'clock this morning, on my way to the post office, I was startled. My first thought was to run back for an overcoat. Instead of that I put on steam.

Breakfast over, I betook myself to the pine lands, my rule being to improve cool days in that sunny region, leaving the shady hammock woods for hotter weather. It was cold enough for overcoat and mittens. In Massachusetts, with anything like the same temperature, I should certainly have worn them. Here, however, it was not so plain a case. I was to be on foot till noon, and I felt sure that long before that time the lightest outer garment would become intolerable. So I buttoned my one coat tightly about me, stuffed my hands into my pockets, and hastened my steps. For a mile, perhaps, I kept up the

pace. By that time the sun had begun to make itself felt. At the end of the second mile the temperature was nothing less than summer-like, and before the third mile was finished my coat was on my arm; and as I came down one of the city streets, on my return at noon, and met two Seminole Indians walking abroad dressed, after their airy fashion, in nothing but waistcoat and shirt, the sight of their comfortable uncivilized legs was calculated to make a perspiring man envious.

By nine o'clock, indeed, the weather was superb; but presently I came to an opening in the woods. Here was a field of tomato plants in front of a new, unpainted house. Some recent settler had cleared a piece of ground and established a home in this land of perpetual summer. And to support himself and his family he had "gone into early tomatoes." So much was to be seen at a glance. And yes, there stood the man himself in the midst of his plantation. I went near and accosted him, expressing my hope that the frost (for by this time it was plain there had been one) had not damaged his crop. He had been badly frightened in the night, he confessed, but thought he had mostly escaped harm. "I was glad," he said, dwelling upon the verb with a pleasant foreign accent, "when I saw the ther-

mometer" (pronounced etymologically, with the accent on the penult). I fear he was worse hit than he knew. At all events there were many acres of wilting tomato plants only a mile away on the same road. One man, whom I saw looking over his field, was calling the attention of a solicitous neighbor to the fact that a certain part of the plantation had fared better than the rest. A few burning stumps had happened to be left smouldering on one edge of the field overnight, and the wind had drifted a light blanket of smoke across that corner.

But even in unprotected gardens the different parts had not fared alike. Here the tender plants were wilting as the sun shone on them, and yonder, only five or ten yards away, there was no symptom of blight. So true is it of tomato vines, as of nobler creations, that one shall be taken and the other left. The frost is like the wind, it striketh where it listeth, and thou seest the effect thereof; and the poor man suffereth with the rich.

Such are the cruel uncertainties of truck farming in this sub-tropical region, far down toward the very tip of Florida. Like the speculator in copper or in oil, the farmer goes to bed rich and gets up poor. But, like the dabbler in "shares," the farmer is not easily discouraged. Though he has moved from one point to another, farther

and farther down the peninsula, the frost pursuing him, he will still try again. There is one thing to be depended upon (let us be thankful to say it) — a sanguine man's hope.

So much for tillers of the soil. For the rest of us, mere idlers and wayfarers, concerned only with questions of sight-seeing and momentary comfort, a day like the present needs no bettering. My own course, as I have said, lay through the pine woods — sunny, spacious, not in the least like anything that a New Englander would call a forest. At short intervals the road, white and hard, ran past a small clearing, generally with a house upon it. Here would be orange trees, mango trees (just now in bloom), splendid hibiscus shrubs, pineapples, perhaps, with other novelties pleasant for Northern eyes to look upon, or, quite as likely, a field of tomatoes (the fruit nearly grown), or a sweet-potato patch.

Near one of the houses the loud cries of some strange bird troubled my curiosity. The opera-glass showed me nothing, and I was none the wiser till beside a second house I heard the same voice again. This time I put aside my scruples and made a set attempt to solve the mystery. A woman before the door was inquisitive about the stranger, but the stranger was still more inquisitive about the bird; and by and by, on a

lower perch than I had thought, there the fellow stood at the top of a shrub, directly before my eyes, a Florida jay. It was nine years since I had seen a bird of his kind, and the sight was welcome accordingly. Perhaps he knew it. At any rate, whether for my pleasure or his own, he held his ground and kept up his harsh, shrikely vociferations.

The Florida jay (a crestless bird, not at all the same as the Florida blue jay, which abounds everywhere and is everywhere noisy, especially in the villages) is strictly a bird of the peninsula, being found nowhere else — a remarkable instance of extreme localization. I ran upon still another individual before reaching the end of my jaunt, — on the outskirts of Lemon City, — and all three were in dooryards. Oak scrub (where you may look out for rattlesnakes) and human neighborhood, these, as I read the signs, are the Florida jay's desiderata.

In general, as compared with the hammock woods, the pine lands are nearly birdless. An occasional sparrow hawk (another strangely trustful creature, very common in this country[1]), an

[1] One was living in the greenhouse connected with the big hotel. The gardener told me that it had come in of itself, and persisted in staying. He had tried in vain to get rid of it. Tossed out of doors, it would at once return and make itself at home.

occasional mockingbird (more than once in splendid song), a shrike now and then, a flock of myrtle-birds, and another of palm warblers, a good many white-breasted swallows and turkey buzzards overhead, with a bunch of silent sparrows skulking beneath the dwarf palmettoes, — these are what I now remember.

11/15/14

Birds or no birds, flowers or no flowers, I should have enjoyed the eight miles. The bright sunshine, the temperate, genial warmth, the endless, widely spaced woods, the blue sky, and on one side the blue expanse of Biscayne Bay, — summer in winter, — I am not so long from snowy Massachusetts but that these things are enough to make for me a kind of perpetual fiesta. As I said to begin with (and it is as true of thoughts and feelings as of the tenderest of garden crops), there is nothing like weather.

Miami

BEWILDERMENT

If any untraveled Northern botanist wishes to be puzzled, hopelessly confused, clean put out of his reckoning, let him come to Miami. His knowledge will drop away from him till not a rag is left. Let him arrive, as I did, after dark, and in the morning take the road southward to Cocoanut Grove. The distance is only five miles, and the walking excellent. I should like to go with him, and listen to his exclamations and comments.

The cocoanut palms before the hotel, as he leaves the piazza, he has no need to inquire about; such things he has at least seen in pictures. And the parti-colored crotons, likewise, are nothing new; he has seen the like in hothouses, if nowhere else. And the scores of big, round hibiscus bushes, each with its score or two of regal scarlet blossoms, — these, or poverty-stricken imitations of them, he has admired before now in the Boston Public Garden and elsewhere. The acalypha shrubs, also, he will perhaps recognize upon a second look, though he has never before seen them growing as a hedge, carefully

squared, three or four feet high, and as many feet thick. Yonder euphorbia bush, too (*Poinsettia*), with its flaring, flaming rosettes of scarlet floral leaves at the tips of the stems — this, like the crotons, he is more or less familiar with under glass. All these are cultivated plants, pleasant to look upon out of doors in midwinter, but of themselves not especially interesting, perhaps, to a botanist.

But now, at the foot of Thirteenth or Fourteenth Street, less than a quarter of a mile from the hotel, we come to some vacant lots. Here are a few dingy live-oaks (still with last year's leaves on), and in their shadow, sprawling over the tangled undergrowth, a wilderness of gadding morning-glory vines. How lovely the flowers are — pink and blue! Unless it be the ubiquitous fish crow, there is nothing else so common in this Miami country as the morning-glory; and the vines, acres on acres, hold in bloom, one kind and another, so I am given to understand, almost or quite the whole year round.

Now we leave the sidewalk and are in the pine woods. The trees — long-leaved pines — our botanist knows well enough, the train having brought him past a thousand miles of such, on his way hither; though, even so, he might be puzzled to tell to which of two related species

(*Palustris* and *Elliottii*) they belong. From the rude bridge, as we cross the Miami River, he admires the myriad-footed, glossy-leaved mangrove thickets that line the banks, especially as he looks up the stream. Just beyond are ancient live-oaks, the huge spreading branches of which support a profusion of air-plants (poor relations of the pineapple), with here and there an orchid. I should like to show him an *Epidendrum* such as I secured ten days ago — an open spray of a dozen blooms, handsome enough to grace the finest of hothouse collections; but I have not been able to find a second specimen, with all my searching. However, a smaller, one-flowered species is common enough, and if he is sufficiently enterprising he will climb one of the trees for it, or — as I did — cut a stick by means of which, with more or less hard work, he can pry the bulbous root from its foothold.

"What is this yellow flower?" he asks, as we go on.

"I don't know," is my answer. "Some member of the pulse family."

My companion knew as much as that already.

"And this bush, with its strangely contorted pods?"

Here I am more at home, and proud to show it. The plant is *Pithecolobium Unguis-*

Cati, I tell him. Small wonder the pods are twisted.

With this we come to more live-oaks, on which are more air-plants and orchids, and just beyond is a confusion of thick-leaved trees and shrubs.

"What is this?" he asks; "and this? and this?"

I have no idea, I am obliged to answer. But the tall tree a little farther on is *Ficus aurea*, I hasten to remark, with a show of extreme erudition.

"A fig-tree?" he answers, in a tone of surprise; for, being a botanist, he knows, of course, that *ficus* is fig.

Yes, I assure him, it is a *kind* of fig (rubber tree, it is otherwise called), though the leaf is small and, as botanists say, "entire," not in the least resembling the modest fig-leaf of convention. I know the tree's name, as I know that of the shrub before mentioned, because I was told it yesterday. One's knowledge (of names) increases rapidly under favorable circumstances, in a country like this.

Yonder very noticeable shrub, bearing large globular bunches of small bright-purplish berries (no eye could miss them), is the French mulberry, so called (*Callicarpa Americana*); and

the larger and leafier bush near it, set along the branches with more loosely disposed orange-colored berries, is *Trema micrantha*, a plant which Chapman's Flora credits to but one place in the United States, — "Shellmounds in Lastero Bay, South Florida," — though hereabout it is one of the commonest of the common. Both it and the French mulberry are prime favorites with various kinds of birds. Mocking-birds and catbirds are feasting on the berries at this moment.

And yes, here is a tree that I knew would excite my companion's curiosity. No stranger ever drove over this road (and the first drive of every newcomer to Miami is taken this way) without asking his driver about it: a large tree, all its leafy branches far above the ground, with a strangely conspicuous mahogany-colored bark, the outermost layers of which peel off in loose papery flakes, after the manner of the canoe birch. On my first jaunt into the hammock I heard more than one driver pronounce its eloquent name — gumbo-limbo. The two or three men of whom I made inquiries could tell me nothing more, till my host, who professed no botany, modestly suggested a reference to the dictionary. There, sure enough, I found the clue I was seeking. The tree is *Bursera gummifera*, or Jamaica birch, one of

two Florida representatives of the tropical torchwood family. It is among the chief of my South Florida admirations, especially for its color. It and the Seminoles should be of kindred stock. In the lobby of the hotel, the other evening, I heard one man rallying another (who had been fishing and playing golf bareheaded) upon the magnificent complexion he had put on. "Your face reminds me of the gumbo-limbo," the joker said. The comparison was obvious. I had been thinking the same thing.

Our course takes us through a brief tract of pine land largely occupied by bayberry bushes, about which there are always many myrtle warblers (which is the same as to say bayberry warblers); and presently we are in a dense tropical forest. This is the place I have desired my companion to see; and here, after a few minutes of silent wonderment, his curiosity begins to play. "What is this? What is this? What is this?" His interrogations come in crowds; and to every one my answer is ready — "I don't know." I am in the case of the poor fellow whose sarcastic French instructor promised to teach him in one sentence how to answer correctly every question he might be asked. Like him I have only to respond, "*Je ne sais pas.*" Trees, shrubs, and vines are all far out of my range. During the

fortnight that I have been here, to be sure, I have begun to distinguish differences among them, and even to recognize individuality; but as to what they are, and what their names are, I know absolutely nothing.

It is a strange sensation, so delightfully, tantalizingly strange that I can hardly keep away from the place. Day after day, in spite of the dust and (sometimes) the scorching heat, my steps turn in this direction. "Where have you been?" my new acquaintances say to me at the dinner table; and I answer, almost of course, "Down in the hammock."

Here and there, wherever there is a favorable opening, I venture a few steps into the jungle; but sometimes I cannot stay. A feeling of something like superstitious terror comes over me, the wood is so dense and dark and strange. I am glad to get back into the dusty road. My supposititious companion will be braver than I, I dare say, but he will be with me in confessing how confusingly alike all the trees look, and how utterly unavailable all his previous knowledge proves to be. On this point I have talked with two botanists, and they have both assured me that, although they had lived much in upper Florida, they found themselves here in a world they knew nothing about. With me, who am not a

botanist, or only the sheerest dabbler in the science, it is literally true that in this sub-tropical forest I cannot guess at so much as the family relationship of one plant in twenty.

— Feb 7 —

WAITING FOR THE MUSIC

I AM impatient for the concert to begin. It is the 7th of February. For three weeks I have been in Miami; birds are plentiful; the country, one may almost say, is full of them; the weather, mostly a few shades too warm for a pedestrian's comfort, seems to be all that birds could wish; but thus far there has been scarcely a sign of the grand vernal awakening. Warm or cold, for the birds it is still winter. Phœbes, to be sure, have sung ever since my arrival, I cannot help wondering why; and the same is true of white-eyed vireos. It is impossible to walk through the hammock woods without getting somewhat more than one's fill of their saucily emphatic deliverances. For aught I can see, they are quite as loquacious now as they will be two or three months hence. Once in a while, hardly oftener than once a week, I should say, I have heard a mocking-bird letting himself loose, and rather more frequently, especially during the last few days, cardinal grosbeaks have sweetened the air with their whistle; but for much the greater part the birds are dumb. On the morning of February 1,

as I stepped out upon the piazza, a house wren sang from a live-oak by the kitchen door. I remembered the date. "Good!" said I to myself, "the time of the singing of birds is come." But I was too much in haste. Since then I have heard plenty of wren chattering, but not another note of wren music.

Still the opening of the annual concert cannot be much longer delayed. When I was in Florida nine years ago, mockingbirds were in free song at St. Augustine, before the middle of February; and at this point, three hundred miles and more farther south, the season must be earlier rather than later.

Some of the more distinctively Southern of the birds about me I am especially desirous of hearing — the Florida yellow-throats, for example, a local race of the Maryland yellow-throat, so called. They are everywhere in sight (the dark brown of the flanks distinguishing them readily), and as their music is said to be very unlike that of their familiar Northern relative, I am naturally desirous of adding it to my (memorized) collection. It will be nothing great, presumably, but it will be something new.

Still more interesting will be the song of the painted bunting, or nonpareil, a beauty of beauties that I had never seen (a wild one, I mean)

until this winter. About Miami it is decidedly common, though the green females show themselves ten times as often as the red, blue, and yellow-green males. What a superbly dressed creature the masculine nonpareil is! And he carries himself as if he knew it. "Dear me," he seems always to be saying; "this Joseph's coat of mine makes me so conspicuous! Some day it will be my undoing." My readers will most likely have seen the gorgeous little creature in cages (I found one many years ago in the Boston Public Garden, I remember), though the chances are that they have never seen him in anything like his brightest and liveliest feather. A bird, like a butterfly, was born to be looked at out of doors with the sunlight on him. So far I have heard no note from the nonpareil except his rather soft chip. The birds frequent weedy tangles in open grounds, showing special fondness for patches of the white bur-marigold, and seem to be well scattered over the country.

Day after day I walk down through the hammock (I have spoken of it before, and most likely shall do so again) between Miami and Cocoanut Grove. Indeed, so constant are my peregrinations thither that I begin to find my innocent self treated as a kind of mysterious personage — one of the "features" of the place,

so to speak, an "object of interest," like the gumbo-limbos, the air-plants, and the blossoming lime trees. Three times, at least, I have overheard a driver describing me to his fares as "the man who comes down through this hammock *every day*" — with strong emphasis on the last two words. One passenger was good enough to surmise, quite audibly, that I might be a botanist, while another loudly proclaimed his belief that I must be "a sort of a bird fiend." So much for being useful in one's day and generation. The tourist mind — like the tourist stomach — abhors a vacuum. It must have something to browse upon. And the drivers know it. It is a bad day for the cow when she loses her cud.

In sober truth the hammock is well worth a daily visit; and almost as often as I am here it comes over me what a glorious concert hall it will be when all these thousands of birds find their voices, if they ever do; for it may be, I know, that the great majority will start on their journey northward before that happy day arrives. Here — to name only some of the more common species — here are mockingbirds, catbirds, cardinals, house wrens, Carolina wrens, ruby-crowned kinglets, palm warblers, myrtle warblers, parula warblers, prairie warblers, black-and-white warblers, Florida yellow-throats, oven-birds, blue-

gray gnatcatchers (a host), white-eyed vireos (another host), solitary vireos, chewinks, painted buntings, phœbes, crested flycatchers, and blue jays. What a chorus there would be if the spring should get into all their throats at once! Might I be here to listen! Then, indeed, I could make a list, with the hearing to help the eyesight. Now I follow the road, and find only such birds as happen to be near it at the moment when I pass. Then it would be another story. I should need a stenographer. The names would crowd upon the pencil.

It is really an astonishing, unnatural-seeming thing — this multitude of birds, in this cloudless summer weather, with mating-time so close at hand, and no impulse to sing. Yet that expression is a trifle too strong, or at least too sweeping. This forenoon I heard a gnatcatcher warbling softly, as if to himself, tuning his instrument, it may be, or, more likely, dreaming. The cardinals, too, are certainly growing amorous. I see the bright males quarreling among themselves here and there (they are constantly in the road), and not infrequently, as I have said, they whistle with all sweetness. At that work there is no bird to excel them. How any female heart can resist such appeals is more than any bachelor's heart can imagine. I rejoice in their numbers.

I should love to walk through the hammock and hear them all whistling together, a chorus a good mile in length and no rod without a bird.

Loggerhead shrikes are paired or pairing. The other day I saw one fly up from the ground and feed another perched on a telegraph wire. He was doing no more than was meet, her cool-appearing, unresponsive manner seemed to say. Mockingbirds, also, though singing little, are beginning to manifest symptoms of jealousy. If all the mockers and all the cardinals should break into voice at once, the air itself would hardly contain the music.

Two pileated woodpeckers that I see every few days at a particular spot in the hammock have already come to an understanding, or so I fancy from certain bits of conduct that I have been privileged to witness. This morning I stood watching the female as she hammered to pieces a decayed branch close by me, when all at once her mate called in the distance. Instantly she held up her head, as much as to say, "Hark! Was that he?" and the next moment she was gone. Then I heard low conversational notes, followed presently by loud drumming on a resonant stub or branch. I thought of what I have heard preachers say, that Heaven is a state, not a place.

Pileated woodpeckers are birds good to look at, and, wild as they look, it is pleasant to find them so approachable. But in fact, this is most productive woodpecker country. Here are flickers in abundance, red-bellies almost as many, and along with them the red-headed, the red-cockaded (in the pine lands), the yellow-bellied (least common of all), the downy, and the hairy; all, in short, that could be expected, with the exception of the ivory-billed; and (such is human nature) I would give more to see him than all the rest together.

Well, I will not wish time away, as the saying is. I begin to perceive that I have none to spare. But I shall rejoice when some morning I go out and find the conductor's arm lifted, and the chorus minding the beat.

PERIPATETIC BOTANY

WHEN I called upon my friend the entomologist, a few evenings ago, she informed me that she had passed a very exciting day. While out on her usual insect-collecting expedition, along the bay shore, she had come suddenly upon an unknown plant growing among the mangrove bushes. A glance at the blossom showed that it must belong to the mallow family, and on getting back to the hotel and consulting the manual, she determined it at once as *Pavonia racemosa*, — "Miami and Key Biscayne." Every collector knows the pleasure of discovering a plant or other specimen, the known habitat of which is entitled to this kind of exact specification.

"Very good," said I, when she had finished the story, "I shall go down to-morrow and look at *Pavonia racemosa* for myself."

The next afternoon, therefore, saw me at the place; but it appeared that I had not sufficiently attended to my friend's instructions. At all events, I could find nothing that looked like a *Malva*. In a country so richly and strangely furnished as this, however, a visitor cannot turn

his eyes in any direction without putting them upon something he never saw before; and so it happened that while I hunted vainly for one thing I found another and better; or if it was not better in itself, it was more unexpected and interesting. This was a shrub, or small tree, bearing large, glossy, coriaceous leaves, clustered near the ends of the branches, from which depended long, smooth, pear-shaped or gourd-shaped buds. More careful search revealed a few faded flowers and a large pendent green fruit. And then, ten minutes afterward, as I was starting away, my eyes fell upon a clump of the rare *Pavonia*.

With that, of course, there was no room for difficulty. I had only to compare the specimen with the printed description, and check the name. But as for the strange shrub, of which I had bud, blossom, fruit, and leaf (what more could a man desire?), with that I was fairly beaten. Even a methodical, schoolboyish use of the "key" was without result. The signs brought me, or seemed to bring me, to the Bignonia family, and there came to nothing.

Happily a professor of botany in one of our great universities had arrived in town within the last twenty-four hours, and after supper I invited him to my room to help me with the puzzle. He set about the work just as I had done, only after

a more workmanlike fashion, and him also the key led to the *Bignoniaceæ*, but no farther. As the common saying is, the trail had "run up a tree." In short, with all the facts before us, — leaves, buds, blossom, fruit, — we were stumped. "It is some representative of the Bignonia family not included in Chapman's Flora," was the professor's final verdict.

The next forenoon we had agreed to spend together in the big hammock, through which I had been sauntering by myself for the past five weeks. We should pass the Agricultural Experiment Station on the way, and I determined to carry the troublesome specimen along and submit it to the professor in charge. So said, so done; but as we stopped at the post office, there stood the man himself at the door. "What is this?" I asked, scarcely waiting to bid him good-morning. "*Crescentia*," he answered promptly, "a plant of the Bignonia family." So the other professor had been exactly right.

And now for the more dramatic part of the story. The day before — at noon of the day on which I found the plant in question — I received a letter from a Boston friend, himself a university professor of botany, to whom I had written, begging him to quit his desk, like a reasonable man, and join me in this botanical paradise. He

replied that he could not come, and furthermore, that he was n't so very sorry. New England winter is to him a constant refreshment and exhilaration, it appears. Happy New Englander! "To-day is simply perfect," he wrote, "and you can't beat it in Miami." As to that point I reserve my opinion. "How changed the place must be from what it was when I was there in the '80's," he continued. "No railroad then within hundreds of miles, and none of your modern improvements. It is a great place for plants. I shan't forget how delighted I was to find *Crescentia cucurbitina* in flower. I had searched the whole range of Keys for it in vain."

This very plant, of the existence of which I had never before heard, I had found, without knowing it, within two hours after receiving my friend's letter.[1]

Winter botanizing by newcomers, in a country so foreign as this, where much the greater part of the shrubs and trees are West Indian, with no better help than Chapman's Flora, is carried on under almost discouraging difficulties. "If we only had the blossoms!" the professor is continually exclaiming. And his pupil responds,

[1] And after all this talk about the plant I must in candor add that it turned out to be by no means rare along the bay shore. I think I am not wrong in remembering to have heard it called the calabash tree.

"Yes, if we only had!" As it is, we content ourselves with finding out a few things daily, guessing at characters and relationships (no very bad practice, by the way), running down all sorts of clues, real or imaginary, like detectives on the hunt for a murderer, and even asking questions freely of chance passers-by, especially of the numerous class known by the white people hereabout as "Bahama niggers." They, rather than their pale-faced superiors, seem to be observant of natural things. It is likely, too, that they or their forbears may have brought some traditionary knowledge of such matters from the islands where the plants are more at home. At all events, it is pleasant to notice how ready even the black children are, not only to answer questions, but to ask them as well, about any flowers that one happens to be carrying.

The other day I came suddenly upon a bush, the like of which I had seen and wondered over a hundred times since my arrival in Miami, remarking especially the highly peculiar, almost perpendicular carriage of its innumerable thick, brightly varnished leaves, a device, as the professor had suggested, for protecting them against the vertical rays of the sun. I had never seen either fruit or blossom, but here, on this particular plant, my eye fell upon a few scattered pur-

plish drupes. Now, then, here was something to go upon. Now, possibly, with a sprinkling more of good luck, I might find the name of the bush. I was a mile or two from town, on the road to Alapattah Prairie, where there are many truck farms. A white man came along, one of the "truckers," driving homeward from the city.

"Do you know what this is?" I inquired, showing him the specimen.

"No, sir," he answered.

Soon I met another man, and proposed to him the same question, with the same result. A third attempt was no more successful. Then I overtook two colored men talking beside a quarry.

"Excuse me," I said, "but can you tell me the name of this plant?"

"Yes, sir, it is cocoa plum," answered one of them; and the other said, "Yes, cocoa plum."

And so it was; for on referring to the manual I found the bush fully described under that name.

Another experiment in this kind of putting myself to school, it is fair to add, was less in the Bahama colored man's favor. A tourist whom I happened upon resting beside the hammock road held in his hand two or three twigs, from each of which depended a large, stony, pear-shaped fruit, and seeing me curious about the

novelty, he kindly offered me one. This, also, I forthwith carried into the city, stopping passengers by the way — like a natural-historical Socrates — to ask them about it. No one, white or black, could tell me anything till in a fruit shop I questioned a white boy. "It's a seven-year apple," he said. "Some foolish local name," I thought. At all events it could do me no good, since it was not to be found in Chapman's index. But that evening, on my showing the specimen to the entomologist, and telling her what the boy had said, she replied, "Certainly, that is right. The plant is *Genipa*, or seven-year apple." And under the word "Genipa" I found it so spoken of in the Standard Dictionary. There the fruit is said to be edible, which seems to disprove the conjecture of another lady to whom I had shown it, that it derives its name from the fact that it would take an eater seven years to digest it. Apples, like men, are not fairly to be judged in the green state.

I have said that this guessing at characters and relationships is not a bad discipline. And no more is it the worst of fun. Of this I had only two days ago a strikingly happy proof. Everywhere in the hammock there grows a tall tree, noticeable for the peculiar color of its bark and its channeled and often fantastically con-

torted trunk. The leafy branches are always far overhead (a necessity in so crowded a place), and I had seen the purplish, globular drupes only as they had dropped one by one to the ground. At every opportunity I had made inquiries about the tree, but had received no light, nor, after much searching, had either the professor or myself been able to hit upon so much as a plausible conjecture as to its identity. Well, two days ago, as I say, we were walking together on the outskirts of the city, when we came to a tree of this kind growing in the open, the fruit-bearing branches of which hung within reach. We pulled one of them down, and I exclaimed at once, "Why, this should be related to the sea-grape!" — a most curious West Indian tree (*Coccoloba uvifera*, a member of the buckwheat family!) which grows freely along the shore of Biscayne Bay. "See the fruit," said I, "for all the world like a bunch of grapes." With that we began a detailed examination, and, to make a long story short, the tree proved to be another species of *Coccoloba* — *C. Floridana*.

That was pretty good guessing, based as it was on nothing better than an "external character," as the professor rather slightingly called it. For five weeks my curiosity had been exercised over the puzzle, and in five seconds I had

found the needed clue. Who will say that this was not better and more interesting, and withal more instructive, than to have been told the tree's name on the first day I saw it?

A PEEP AT THE EVERGLADES

My first stroll in Miami was taken under the pilotage of a lady who had already spent several winters here. In the course of it we came suddenly upon a colored man lying face downward in the grass, under a blazing sun, fast asleep. It was no uncommon happening, my friend remarked; she was always stumbling over such dusky sleepers. But in this Southern clime the luxury of physical inactivity is not appreciated by black people alone. I was walking away from the city at a rather brisk pace, one morning, when I passed a lonesome shanty. A white man sat upon the rude piazza, and another man and a boy stood near.

"Are you going to work to-day?" asked the boy of the occupant of the piazza.

"No," was the answer, quick and pithy.

"Why not?"

"I ain't got time."

I laid the words up as a treasure; I do not expect to hear the philosophy of indolence more succinctly and pointedly stated if I live a thousand years.

But though we Northern visitors may sometimes envy our Southern brethren their gift of happy *insouciance*, it is not for our possessing. We were born under another star. Our lack is the precise opposite of theirs; even in our vacation hours we have seldom time to sit still.

So it happened that on a sultry, dog-day morning, with a south wind blowing, the sky partly clouded, — a comfort to the eyes, — the professor and the bird-gazer, after an early breakfast, set forth upon a reconnoissance of the Everglades. We took each a boat and an oarsman, planning to go up the Miami River, or rather its south branch, till we were among the "islands" — small pieces of hammock woods scattered amid the wilderness of saw-grass.

As each of us had his own boat, so each had his own errand, one botanical, the other lazily ornithological. The professor expected to see and learn much — especially about the adaptation of plants to their surroundings; his associate expected to see and learn little — little or nothing; and according to each man's faith, so it was unto him.

For the first mile or so — as far as the tide runs, perhaps — the river is densely beset on either side by a shining green hedge of mangrove bushes, every branch sending down "aerial

roots" of its own, till landing among them is an adventure hardly to be thought of. After the mangroves come taller hedges of the cocoa plum, leafier still, and equally shining.

"Are n't you glad you know what this bush is?" I shouted downstream to the professor.

"Indeed I am," he shouted back.

Without this knowledge, which we had acquired within a few days, by a kind of accident, as before related, our present state of mind would have been pitiable. We were surprised to find the plant so fond of water, having noticed it heretofore in comparatively dry situations. Another example of the extreme adaptability of tropical plants, the professor remarked.

By and by we came to the first cypress trees, the only ones I have seen in this all but swampless Miami neighborhood; beautiful in their new dress of living green. I rejoiced at the sight. Under one of them we landed, admiring the "knees" that its roots had sent up till the ground was studded with them. These, the professor tells me (it is nothing new, by his account of the matter, but it is new to me), are believed to serve as breathing or aerating organs, supplying to the tree the oxygen for lack of which, standing in water, as it mostly does, it would otherwise drown. All visitors to Florida are

impressed by the beauty and majesty of the cypress, and many have no doubt puzzled themselves over the meaning of these strange, apparently useless protuberances — as if nature had attempted something and failed — that are so constantly found underneath. "They never do grow to be trees," my boatman said.

It was at this point, as nearly as I remember, that the stream grew narrow and shallow at once, till behold, we were laboring up what might fairly be called rapids. Here, between the awkward crowding of the banks and the swiftness of the current (it was good, I said to myself, to see water actually *running* in Florida), the men were certainly earning their money. Fortunately, both proved equal to the task. Then a bend in the stream took us away from the neighborhood of the trees (not until, in one of the cypresses, I had remarked my first Miami nuthatch — a white-breast), and into the very midst of the saw-grass. This densely growing, sharp-edged, appropriately named grass, higher than a man's head, standing to-day in two or three feet of water, is said to cover the Everglades. It must render them a frightful place in which to lose one's way. "I should rather be lost at sea in a rowboat," my oarsman declared.

All this while, of course, I had kept a lookout for birds, but, as I had expected, to comparatively little purpose. No doubt there were many about us, but not for our finding. The shallower and quieter edges of the river were covered here and there with broad leaves of the yellow lily, among which should have been at least a chance gallinule, it seemed to me; but neither gallinule nor rail showed itself. Here, as everywhere, buzzards and vultures were sailing overhead. Many white-breasted swallows, too, went hawking over the grass, and once a purple martin passed near me. Better still, he allowed me, in one brief note, to hear his welcome voice. Like the new leaves of the cypress, it prophesied of spring.

At intervals a heron of one kind or another started up far in advance. One was snow-white, but whether I was to call it an immature little blue heron or a white egret was more than could be made sure of at my distance. I recall, too, a flock of ducks, a cormorant or two, speeding through the air after their usual headlong manner, a solitary red-winged blackbird, astray from the flock, and the cries of killdeer plovers. Kingfishers were not infrequent, two or three ospreys came into sight, and once, at least, I made sure of a Louisiana heron. A lean show-

ing, certainly, for what might have been thought so promising a place.

And now, as the grass grew shorter, so that we could survey the world about us, the water of a sudden turned shallow. The professor's flat-bottomed boat still floated prosperously, but my own heavier, keeled craft speedily touched bottom. The rower put down the oars, took off his shoes and stockings, rolled up his trousers, and proceeded to lighten the boat of his weight, and drag it forward. This expedient answered for a rod or two. Then we stuck fast again, and the passenger followed his boatman's example and took to the water. So we followed along, the water now deeper, now shallower, the bottom hard and slimy, till after a little we were at the end of our rope. If we were to go farther we must leave the boat behind us.

This was hardly worth while, especially as even in that way we could not hope to proceed far enough to see anything different from what we had seen already. "We will go back," I said, "drifting with the current and stopping by the way." And so we did, my boatman and I, leaving the professor — who, as it turned out, went but a few rods beyond us — to pursue his investigations unhindered.

After all, in spite of our indolent intentions,

the return was faster than the upward journey, as almost of necessity happens, whether one is descending a river or a mountain. The time for loitering is in going up. One good thing we saw, nevertheless, though it was only for an instant.

"What 's that?" my man suddenly exclaimed, in the eagerest of tones. "Look! Right there!"

"Oh, yes," I said; "a least bittern."

It stood crosswise, so to speak, halfway up a tall reed, for all the world like a marsh wren. Then away it went on the wing, and was lost in the grass. It was a good bird to see, besides counting as "No. 91" in my Miami list.

"I never did see a bird like that,"[1] the boatman said. "Such a little fellow!" he called it. It was a pleasure to find him so enthusiastic.

The best thing of the whole trip, notwithstanding, was not the sight of any bird, but our lazy, careless, albeit too rapid gliding down the stream, with the world so bright and calm about us and above. Here and there, for our delight, was a tuft of fragrant white "lilies" (*Crinum*) standing amid a tuft of handsome upright green leaves. More than once, also, we passed boatloads of fishermen (and fisherwomen), white and black.

[1] One of the most striking peculiarities of Southern speech among the illiterate classes (I have observed it in other states besides Florida) is the almost total absence of the word "saw."

One elderly and carefully dressed, city-coated gentleman I especially remember. He sat in the stern of the boat (his African boatman with a line out, also), watching the fluctuations of his bob as earnestly, I thought, as ever he could have watched the fluctuations of the stock market. His whole soul was centred upon that bit of cork and the possible fish below. He actually had a nibble as we passed! What cared he then for "coppers" or "industrials"? He must at some time or other have been a boy. The lucky man! By the look on his face he was happy. And happiness, if I am to judge by what I see, is one of the main things, in Florida. At all events, it was the main thing that I found in the Everglades.

Miami

THE BEGINNINGS OF SPRING

MANIFOLD are the perils of journalism. A few weeks ago I filled a letter with the praise, most sincerely felt, of a certain tropical hammock on the road from Miami to Cocoanut Grove, a place full of birds, and destined, so I hoped, to be equally full of music. This eulogy, it transpires, was read by a bird-loving enthusiast from New England, sojourning for the winter at the Hotel Ormond; and what should he do but send me word, a stranger, that he had packed his trunk and was coming down straightway (two hundred and fifty miles or more) to inspect the wonder.

In due course he arrived, and as soon as possible I led him out of the city, across the river, through a stretch of blazing sunshine, and at last into the heart of the hammock. It was a long jaunt, much longer than he was prepared for, the afternoon was hot, and to make matters worse the hammock showed almost no sign of that profusion of avian existence, with the anticipation of which my glowing periods had filled him.

Fortunately for my reputation, I had forewarned him that such would be the case. The

birds, I explained, either because the season had advanced, or for some other reason, had pretty nearly deserted the jungle of West Indian trees, shrubs, and vines, — for such this particular hammock is, — and had betaken themselves to the more open country, especially to certain groves of newly clad live-oaks, whose sturdy, wide-spreading, rival-killing, trust-creating, monopolistic arms, by the time the trees are of middle age, have made for themselves a relatively sunny clearing.

I had been growing aware of this change in the face of things for a week or two, and now, when the newcomer has been three or four days in Miami, the reality of it is conclusively established. On two mornings of the present week, for example, I found in a few minutes' stroll before breakfast a highly interesting flock of perhaps twenty kinds of birds in the live-oaks and other scattered trees on the very edge of the city, within a hundred rods of my own doorstep: fish crows, boat-tailed grackles, crow blackbirds, red-headed woodpeckers, downy woodpeckers, red-bellied woodpeckers, flickers, catbirds, mockingbirds, house wrens, cardinals, palm warblers, myrtle warblers, parula warblers, prairie warblers, black-and-white warblers, yellow-throated warblers, solitary vireos, yellow-throated vireos,

blue jays, phœbes, ground doves, blue-gray gnat-catchers, ruby-crowned kinglets, a male nonpareil, a Baltimore oriole, a crested flycatcher, a hummingbird, and a hermit thrush. A varied bunch of feathers, and no mistake.

In the tropical hammock, on the other hand, during the same forenoons, I saw, as well as I remember, nothing but white-eyed vireos, phœbes, catbirds, cardinals, palm and myrtle warblers, crested flycatchers, nonpareils, and gnatcatchers. So completely has the condition of things been reversed with the change of season.

Other signs are not lacking that March has brought the spring. Mockingbirds are daily becoming more rhapsodical. The other afternoon, out among the cabins of the black suburb, I stood still while three sang at once on different sides. They are friends of the poor, as well as of the rich. This morning two yellow-throated vireos sang, chattered, and whistled; and a most delicious trilled whistle theirs is, soft, musical, full of sweet and happy feeling. Better still, almost (because more of a novelty), a yellow-throated warbler sang his dreamy tune over and over. This is one of the most exquisite birds ever made; of quiet, modest colors, bluish-black and white, with a single bright jewel to set them off — a gorget of brilliant yellow. To-day I have

seen as many as ten such beauties, I think. Their feeding habits and their movements, as well as their black and white stripes, are surprisingly like those of the black-and-white creeper, — to which they ought to be more nearly related than the systematists allow, — while their song is in the manner of the indigo-bird.

Now, if the nonpareil buntings would only fall into line! Thus far they have not favored me with a note, and indifferent musicians as I know them to be, I believe there is no other bird in Miami that I am so desirous of hearing. Such feathers as they wear! Once in a while, of late, a male has been good enough to take a somewhat lofty perch and display himself. If there is a more gorgeous bird in the United States I should like to see him. Just now there are at least three enthusiasts in Miami — a Kentucky lady, a Rhode Island man, and a Massachusetts man — who are doing their best daily to get their fill of his loveliness.

Phœbes have sung much less of late than they did in January. Then they seemed to find existence a perpetual jubilee. Red-bellied woodpeckers, too, are far less talkative than they were a month ago. Most likely they are busier. And by the by, the Kentucky enthusiast above mentioned pleased me by calling this woodpecker the

"checkerback," a felicitous name, in common use in Kentucky, it appears, and perhaps elsewhere. I am happy to adopt it and pass it on.

If there were words wherewith to describe the indescribable, I should like to tell of a bluebird that I saw a week ago about one of the vegetable gardens out on the prairie. The blue of that creature's back and wings is not to be imagined. The bluest sky never matched it. I would wager that he was Florida born. No Northern bird ever owned such a coat. In my recollection he will stand as one of the sights of the country, along with the "banyan trees," the snaky green vanilla vines, and the tropical jungle.

These letters are of necessity written piecemeal. In this hospitable Southern country, where the weather and so many things beside are continually calling, "Come forth and enjoy us," one cannot stay indoors very long at once. So it happened that at the conclusion of the last paragraph I put down my pencil and started out for another few minutes among the live-oaks. As I approached them I descried a man sitting upon a heap of coal-ashes dumped along the railway. He might have been Job himself, to look at him, but at a second glance I perceived that he was not actually sitting in the ashes, but on a board, and instead of bewailing his afflictions or his

sins, was peacefully minding the New Testament injunction, "Behold the fowls of the air." In short, he was the gentleman from Ormond, with his glass, as it happened, focused upon a handsome prairie warbler.

We passed the time of day, after the bird had flown, — for the field has its courtesies, and we respect them, — and he told me that in spite of the unfavorable north wind (one of our periodical cold spells is upon us, with the mercury in the forties) he had ventured out, and had been liberally rewarded. He had seen yellow-throated warblers, a parula, a prairie, and I forget what else, and, to take his word for it, was living in clover.

Presently a hawk swooped among the trees, and every small bird became invisible as if by magic. Then my companion proposed taking a turn beyond the fence. This we did, and just as we came suddenly upon a huge watch-dog (a great Dane, I suppose he would be called), formidable-looking and chained, but fawning upon us so eagerly that there was nothing for it but to pat him on the head and call him a good fellow — just as we approached him, I say, I nudged the second man to stop. There, straight before us, side by side on the rim of an iron kettle of water set under the trees for the dog's benefit,

stood a male cardinal and a male nonpareil. Perhaps they were not a glorious pair! Them also I shall remember, along with the miraculous bluebird.

Less brilliant, but even more memorable, was my one Bachman's warbler. I had stopped under a live-oak, — on a return from the big hammock, — and was putting my glass upon one bird after another feeding among its blossoms (parulas, yellow-throats, ruby-crowns, gnatcatchers, and myrtle-birds), when in the very topmost spray I sighted a spot of coal-black set in bright yellow. Here was something new. From twig to twig the stranger went, — rather deliberately, for a warbler, — the glass following, till after submitting for perhaps ten minutes to my eager inspection he slipped away, as birds have a knack of doing, without my seeing him go. However, he had shown himself perfectly — the jet breastplate, the yellow forehead, the black crown, the lustrous olive of the upper parts, and the yellow patch upon the wing. He was a bird that I had never expected to see. Comparatively few ornithologists have been so happy.

This was on March 7. For two days we had noticed indications of a migratory movement, especially among parulas and yellow-throated warblers. Probably the Bachman had come

from farther south. My thanks to him for treating me so handsomely, though he might have doubled the obligation, at no cost to himself, by singing me a tune.

FAIR ORMOND

AFTER nearly two months in the extreme south of Florida I have turned my face northward, and here I am at Ormond, fair Ormond-on-the-Halifax. No more bewildering jungles of nameless West Indian trees and climbers, no more cocoanut palms, no more acres of wild morning-glory vines. It gave me a start of pleasurable surprise when, somewhere on this side of Palm Beach, I do not remember where, I saw from the car window a stately sweet-gum tree all freshly green. It had not occurred to me till then that I had found nothing at Miami of this handsome and characteristic Southerner, always one of my favorites.

Indeed, I have come to a different world. I am no longer in a foreign country. Here are lordly magnolias, not yet in blossom, to be sure, but proudly beautiful in the leaf. Here, too, are Cherokee roses, loveliest of all flowers, just coming into their kingdom. At sight of the first glossy-leaved bush, which happened to stand near a house, I made up to the door, not stopping twice to consider, and asked the privilege of picking a flower and a bud. The householder was generous,

and the bush even more so. "Take another, and another," it seemed to say, catching me again and again by the sleeve; "I have enough and to spare." It was hard work for me to get away. Here, also, is the yellow jessamine, only less beautiful than the rose, hanging the tall forest trees full of golden, fragrant bells. And here, sprinkled along the wayside, are stores of blue violets. None of these things are to be seen on the shores of Biscayne Bay. Yes, I am glad to be here.

And the phlox, likewise, the pretty Drummond's phlox of our Northern gardens, dear to me of old, let me not forget that. It is not indigenous to the country, I suppose, but, like the garden verbena, being here it makes itself most comfortably at home, delighting to overrun forsaken orange groves and similar unoccupied waste places. How sweetly it looks up at us with its innocent child's face! Just now one of the guests of the hotel came in with a broad market-basket loaded with it, a good half-bushel, at the very least. "I have counted twenty-six varieties," he said (he was thinking of diversities of color), and there must be somewhere near that number in the crowded vase that he has sent down to brighten my writing-table.

Here, too, is the Atlantic beach. In ten min-

utes I cross the peninsula and am on the sands; or, if I stroll up or down the river shore, — on the western side of the peninsula, — I can hear all the while the pounding of the surf.

I have been in Ormond two days, — two perfect days of temperate summer weather, — and have walked hither and thither, up the river, down the river, across the river, and on the beach, seeing comparatively little of the country as yet, but enough to be able to say that I have never found any place in Florida where a walking man should be better contented. There are paths and roads everywhere, — a convenience not to be taken for granted in this Southern country, — and be his states of mind never so variable, he may here suit the jaunt to the mood.

A visit to Ormond was not in my plans for the winter, and I left Miami with regret. Migratory birds were arriving, and I seemed to be running away just when there was most to detain me; those tropical plants, too, were certain to become more and more interesting as the season grew older; but, like the verbena and the phlox, being here I am thankful. If I have taken leave of some splendid birds (those painted buntings are in my eye as I write), I have found some old friends in their place. It is good to see brown thrashers again, with song sparrows,

white-throats, and chickadees. One of a bird-loving man's strangest sensations at Miami is the absence of chickadees and tufted titmice. I had never been in such a place before. (For eight weeks, let me say in passing, I have seen no English sparrows. Unfortunately I have not yet forgotten how they look.)

In my two days here I have counted but fifty kinds of birds. A goodly number that I know to be present, and even common, I have so far happened to miss. But in the middle of March even fifty birds make something like a festival. Mockers, cardinals, and Carolina wrens — the great Southern trio — are tuneful, of course. Even as I write, a wren is whistling an accompaniment to my pencil. If I could only put the music on the paper! If it would only "modulate my periods!" as Charles Lamb said. When I sit in the shade of a moss-hung live-oak, letting the sea breeze fan me, and listen to an assembly of red-winged blackbirds rehearsing their breezy *conkaree* among the reeds along the Halifax (though it is not a simple *conkaree*, either, but *conkaree-dah*, the old tune with a new coda), I think of swamps in far Massachusetts where on this very 12th of March other redwings are opening the musical season in a very different atmosphere.

Chewinks of both kinds (red-eyes and white-eyes, Northerners and Southerners) are calling and singing. Blue yellow-backed warblers are musical after their manner (they hardly need to be singers, being so exquisite in color, form, and motion), and white-eyed vireos are numerous enough, though nothing like so plentiful as at Miami. Here, as there, they have no thought of hiding their light under a bushel.

It is like old times to see Florida jays sitting on the chimney-tops of the summer cottages along the dunes behind the beach. Thus it was that I saw them first, at Daytona, nine years ago. As a friend and I stopped this morning to rest in the shade of a piazza, one came and stood upon the railing and eyed us long and curiously. "Have you nothing edible about you?" he seemed to say. If we had had anything to offer the beggar, I am confident he would have hopped upon our knees.[1] As it was, he approached within five or six feet while we chirped and talked to him. Florida jays are strange creatures for tameness, and if it were thought worth while could readily be domesticated.

It seemed natural, also, to see pelicans flying in small flocks up the beach, just over the breakers,

[1] We often fed the birds afterward, and one or two, at least, were never shy about coming into our laps.

so that half the time they were invisible, lost in the trough of the sea; moving always in Indian file, flapping their wings and scaling by turns. And still another remembrancer of my previous visit to this part of Florida was the sight of a bald eagle robbing a fishhawk. The hawk made a stubborn defense, dodging this way and that, rising and falling, but in the end the eagle, an old white-headed fellow, was more than a match for his victim; for though they were far away, the motions of the contestants showed plainly enough how the struggle terminated.

On the beach, halfway to his knees in water, stood a great blue heron, leaning seaward, waiting for a fish. He might have been standing there for nine years. At all events I left him in the same position that length of time ago. "Ay, and you," he might rejoin, "you haven't changed, either. You have still nothing better to do than to go wandering up and down the earth, shooting birds with an opera-glass?" True enough. Heron and man, after nine years each is the same old sixpence. "The thing that hath been it is that which shall be, and there is nothing new under the sun." Well, so be it. Only let me find new pleasure in the old places and the old pursuits.

A DAY IN THE WOODS

I WAS well within the truth when I said, a week ago, that there could not be many places in Florida where a walking man would find his wants so generously provided for as at Ormond. Here he may spend a half day in idling over a round of a mile or two, — sea beach, river bank, and woodland, — or he may foot it as industriously as he pleases from morning till night; and the next day and the day after he will have plenty of invitations to "fresh woods," though hardly to "pastures new." Pastures, whether new or old, he may look for elsewhere.

But at Ormond a man may not only walk, he may drive; and this forenoon (March 19) a pair of horses have taken me over such a road as I do not expect soon to find the like of, either in Florida or anywhere else; a course of twelve or fifteen miles, the whole of it (as soon as the bridge over the Halifax was crossed) through most beautiful forest. The road was wide enough for the carriage and no more; soft as a carpet, so that the wheels made no noise, with big trunks of pines, palmettoes, oaks, sweet-gums, magnolias,

and what not crowding upon the track so closely that we could almost put out our hands and touch them as we passed. In the whole distance, to the best of my recollection, we met neither carriage nor foot-passenger.

We drove as we pleased, stopped as we pleased, talked or kept silence, listened to the birds, admired the flowers and the new leafage (there are no words wherewith to intimate its freshness and beauty), and withal dreamed of the time when all the land about us was the scene of busy labors, when sugar and rice and cotton were cultivated here by hundreds of slaves, and those who owned the land, as they imagined, had no thought of a day when the forest should again claim all their fair possessions. We drove to Mount Oswald, so called, near the mouth of the Tomoka River, thence over the famous old causeway, set with palmettoes, to Buckhead Bluff, at which point the King's road to St. Augustine is supposed (or known) to have crossed the river a hundred years ago. I was glad to see the river (I shall see more of it, if I live a day or two longer), but the great thing was the forest, with its present beauty and its whisperings of past romance.

Now it is afternoon, and I am in the same woods. No lover of wild life ever drove over a beautiful country road for the first time with-

out saying to himself again and again, "I must come this way on foot." A carriage is well enough in its place, but really to see things a man must be on his own legs. Immediately after luncheon, therefore, with a merry company of golfers (a flourishing sect in Florida), I took the little one-horse street-car to the railway station, and now, having crossed a narrow field and left the golfers at their afternoon devotions, I am in the Volusia road, in the noblest of hammock woods.

The first half-mile of the way I have walked over more than once already, and having in mind the shortness of the afternoon I quicken my steps. The doing so is no hardship. For the last forty-eight hours the wind has blown from the north; during the night the mercury settled to 38°; and though it is considerably warmer than that now, a pretty brisk movement is still not uncomfortable.

Here I pass a mournful sight — an old orange grove, of which nothing remains but the sandy soil and a few blackened stumps. The "great freeze" of six or seven years ago killed the trees to the roots. Nearly opposite, to add to the forlornness of the impression, stands a deserted house; and not far along is another, that looks only less unthrifty and disconsolate, with an old

woman smoking a pipe on the piazza. It would be a strict moralist who should grudge her that one comfort.

Now I have left the last human habitation behind me, and in front stretches the narrow road arched with greenness, running away and away till it runs out of sight. What lofty oaks and sweet-gums! And what beautiful lichens cover them with wise-looking hieroglyphics! If we could only decipher their meaning! I note especially the ribbed, muscular-seeming trunks of the hornbeams, one of which, the largest, is riddled with uncountable perforations, the work of some sap-loving woodpecker; and I turn about more than once to admire the proportions of a magnificent magnolia, one of the largest I have ever seen. My thanks to the highway surveyor who went a few feet out of his way to leave it standing. A rod or two more, and I stop to look up at some exceptionally tall pines and live-oaks, a noticeable group, in the altitude of which I have before found a pleasure.

How they soar, as if to see which shall go highest! And as high as the oak branches go, so high the gray moss follows.

Now I am at the fork of the road. My course is to the right. "Old Stage Road to Buckhead Bluff on the Tomoka River at the crossing of

the 'old King's road' to St. Augustine." So the guideboard reads, with commendable particularity. "Old" is the word. Even the wind in the tree-tops seems to be whispering stories of things that happened long, long ago. And the trees answer, "Yes, so the fathers have told us." To think of all those busy people! And every one of them dead!

Here is a bit of clearing where the sun strikes in. It feels good. This is the right kind of outdoor weather — shade not uncomfortable and the sun's heat welcome. A white-eyed chewink, happy Floridian, is whistling from the brush. Holly trees are common, and the sweet-bay is everywhere. Its shining leaves are of a most salubrious odor, as if they might be for the healing of the nations. I am continually plucking them and rolling them in my fingers.

And yonder is the maker of the clearing — a colored man, standing beside a woodpile. I hail him to remark that it is a fine day, and he answers, "Yes, very nice." Strange that when two men meet for the only time in their lives they should find nothing more important to communicate than that it rains, or that the sun is shining. But weather is the thing, after all, especially in Florida. Perhaps it deserves all that is said about it. Anyhow, the woodcutter and the stroller have

expressed a feeling of neighborliness and have told each other no lies.

With every rod the wood changes from glory to glory. I remark with special joy a grove of tall, slender, smooth-barked water-oaks, every one in new leaf. Height rather than girth is their aim. "We must have the sun," they say, "and we climb to get it." How good the sun is, let their leaves testify; those millions on millions of shining leaves, every one new. Yes, every one new. I cannot write the word too often. And many times as I write it, the Northern reader will have but an insufficient sense of its meaning. Such freshness and greenness! Neither memory nor imagination can body it forth. Happy are the eyes that behold the miracle twice in a single spring. It is like doubling one's year.

A Carolina wren whistles, near at hand, but invisible (invisibility is the wren's trick), and a red-eyed vireo, farther away, has begun his reiterative, summer-long exhortation. I was taken by surprise, two or three days ago, when I heard the first of his kind in this same hammock; I was not looking for him so early. His irrepressible cousin, the white-eye, has been abundantly vocal for at least two months. At this very minute one is rehearsing a strain with a pretty and decidedly original quirk at the end. And, by the by, I notice

[June 5- 1890]

that many white-eyes hereabout practice a deceptive imitation of the crested flycatcher's loud whistle, while others, or perhaps the same ones, sometimes begin with a broken measure, such as I think I never heard from a Massachusetts white-eye, strongly suggestive of the summer tanager. Call him pert, saucy, a chatter-box, Old Volubility, what you will, the white-eye is indisputably a genius.

But for to-day, and for me, none of the birds sing quite so feelingly or so well as the wind in the tree-tops. I stop again and again to listen to it, and would stop oftener still but for the brevity of the afternoon and the uncertainty I am in as to the length of the walk before me.

Hickory nuts, split in halves and lying blackened in the sand, lead me to look upward. Yes, there are the trees, still with bare boughs. Their tender leafage does well to be late in sprouting, even in this Southern country. There is no tree but knows a thing or two. Every kind has a wisdom of its own. *Experientia docet* is true of them as of us.

And now I suddenly find myself nearing the railroad, and having consulted my watch conclude to go back over the sleepers. It will be my shortest course, and will have the further advantage of taking me past a swamp, on the edge of

which I caught glimpses of sora rails a few days ago. This time I will be more cautious in my approaches.

A cardinal is whistling, a checker-back is chattering, many warblers are in the sunny tree-tops, and from somewhere in the depths of the forest comes the deep, oracular voice of an owl, though the sun is at least half an hour high. *Whoo, whoo, who-who*, he calls. I love to hear him. On the wire fence is a yellow jessamine vine, still sporting a few last blossoms, and for rods together the sandy railway embankment is draped with exquisite white "bramble roses," the flowers of the creeping blackberry. Later comers will find berries on the vines, but perhaps I have the better part of the crop.

I am well satisfied, at all events, and am still feasting upon the sight when out of the tall grass on my left hand comes a rail's voice — the voice of one crying in the wilderness. I am drawing near the swamp, and make haste to cover with my field-glass the spaces of open water among the dead flags. Yes, there are birds — one, two, three, four. But they are not rails. I see as much as that before I have finished my count. Three of them are swimming. They are gallinules; and when one of them turns, and the sunlight strikes him, I see the red plate on his fore-

head. They are Florida gallinules, my first ones for nine years. My glass follows their movements jealously till the thunder of an approaching train startles them and they fly to the shelter of the tall grass. I shall come this way again, and not only see but hear them. Their language is various and interesting, though most of it has the accent of the barnyard.

A pileated woodpecker crosses the track just before me, with all his colors flying, a pair of bluebirds sit in their accustomed place upon the telegraph wire, and from the neighboring pines I catch the finch-like twitters of a brown-headed nuthatch. This is close upon the railway station and the golf links. My afternoon is done, but the golf players are still making the most of daylight. I blush to confess it, but there are some enthusiasms with which even that of a strolling naturalist will hardly endure comparison.

PICTURE AND SONG

WHAT seek we in Florida? The same that we seek everywhere — sensations. Life is made of them. In proportion as they are lively and pleasurable we find it good. The higher their quality, the nobler the part that feels them, the less physical they are, the less they have to do with eating and drinking and being clothed, the more truly we are alive and not dead.

Most of the people that we meet in Florida are vacationers like ourselves. At home they may be in the wool business, in shoes, or in dyestuffs; here they have no occupation but to amuse themselves. In the daytime they fish, play golf, drive, or lounge upon the hotel piazza. In the evening they sit in the lobby, listen (possibly) to the music, admire (or not) the gowns and jewels of the ladies (the self-sacrificing creatures are all on parade, like so many Queens of Sheba), take a hand at cards, or gossip about something or nothing with a traveling companion or a chance acquaintance. At the worst they dawdle over a newspaper or a novel, and consume the hour in smoke. To

judge by appearances their sensations are not poignant, though the anglers and the golfers, and even the shuffle-board players, no doubt have their exciting moments; but on the whole the winter passes rather quickly. When there is nothing else to do, and the time drags, one can always cheer one's self by thinking how intemperate the season is at home. The most refreshing parts of the Northern newspapers are their reports of snowstorms and blizzards.

For my own part, I admire the ladies' gowns (in one sense or other of the word, who could help it?), but what my untutored mind is most taken with is the beauty of the natural world, the world as God made it, rather than as man, even the man-milliner, has improved it. I love to look up or down the moss-hung vista of the river road (I am still at Ormond), or, turning my head, to gaze across the smooth water at the freshly green, happy-looking oak woods and the overtopping pines. These are pictures that I hope never to forget.

The other day an old friend, a settler in these parts, rowed me down the river a few miles. There we took an untraveled road through the forest, and by and by came suddenly to a clearing, in the middle of which stood an abandoned house. The place had once been an orange

orchard, I suppose; and even now, although there was hardly so much as a stump left to tell the tale, it remained in its own way a paradise of beauty. From end to end the five or six sandy acres were thickly overgrown with Drummond's phlox, all in fullest bloom, a rosy wilderness.

It was a pretty show. We exclaimed over it, and gathered handfuls of the lovely flowers, but as we rowed homeward we were favored with a spectacle to which it would be a profanation to apply such epithets. The afternoon, which began doubtfully, had turned out a marvel of perfection. The wind had gone down, the river was like glass, and the level rays of the sun touched all the shore woods to an almost unearthly beauty. And withal, the sky was full of the softest, most exquisitely shaded, finely broken clouds. It was an hour such as comes once and is never repeated. In my mind the memory of it has already taken its place beside the memory of a sunset seen many years ago from a Massachusetts mountain-top. These are some of the "sensations" of which I spoke. They are the sufficient rewards of travel, though now and then, the Fates favoring, we may have them at home also, without money and without price.

The next day, or the next but one, I strolled

about two miles up the river northward, to the house where, on my first day at Ormond, I had seen a Cherokee rosebush just breaking into flower. This time it was at the top of its glory, such a glory as I have no hope of describing. At a moderate calculation the mound of leafy stems must have borne four or five thousand roses, every one the very image of purity and sweetness. Those who are familiar with the Cherokee rose will perhaps be able to imagine the picture of loveliness here presented; and such readers will be glad to know that a lover of beauty (not an idle, time-killing tourist, but a man at home and at work), having heard my report of the bush, walked four or five miles on purpose to see it, and declared himself amply repaid for his labor. "The poetry of earth is never dead;" and there is never wanting some poet's soul to enjoy it, and so to make it twice alive.

Though it is near the end of March there is comparatively little sign of bird migration. Chuck-will's-widows — Southern whippoorwills, if one chooses to call them so — have arrived and are abundantly in voice. The nights are scarcely long enough for all they have to say. I hear of a cottager who is awakened by one so persistently and so early in the morning that he

is devising means to kill it. I hope he will not succeed, although if the bird is close to his open window and begins to unburden himself at half-past two, as one does within hearing from my bed, I cannot very seriously blame him for the attempt. He goes out in his night-clothes, I am told, and tries to "shoo" it away; but the bird has a message, as truly as Poe's raven, and is bound to deliver it, whether men will hear or forbear.

On the morning of March 26, in an ante-breakfast stroll, I found among the pines immediately in the rear of the hotel the first summer tanager of the season. The splendid creature, bright red throughout, was flitting from tree to tree, singing a measure or two from each. He acted as if he were happy to be back in Ormond, and I did not wonder. A red-eyed vireo was singing on the 15th, and since then birds of the same kind have become moderately common. Considering that the red-eye is not supposed to winter anywhere in the United States (I saw nothing of it at Miami), and arrives so late in New England, it seems to have reached Ormond surprisingly early.

For some time the woods have been alive in spots with busy crowds of warblers. Parulas especially have been present in enormous force,

and have sung literally in chorus. I have seen many yellow-throated warblers also, and many myrtles, with a fair sprinkling of prairies and black-and-white creepers. But the birds that have sung best — after the mocker and the thrasher, perhaps — are not spring comers, but our faithful winter friends, the cardinal grosbeak and the Carolina wren. Indeed, of all Southern songsters I believe that the cardinal stands first in my affections. Sweetness, tenderness, affectionateness, and variety, these are his gifts, and they are good ones, even if they are not the highest.

Out in the flatwoods, a few days ago, we suddenly heard, coming from a thicket of dwarf palmetto on the edge of water, a quite unexpected strain, a loud, short trill. "What was that?" asked my companions, as we looked at one another; for there were three pairs of field-glasses in the carriage. "It sounded like a swamp sparrow," said I, with doubt in my voice. At that moment the measure was given out again, prefaced this time by a peculiar indrawn whistle. Then the truth flashed upon me. It was the song of a pine-wood sparrow. I had not heard it for many years. In the same place meadow larks were in tune, bluebirds warbled, and pine warblers and brown-headed nuthatches were in voice

among the pine trees. Here, too, I was glad to hear, for the first time in Florida, the caw of a real crow, a bird with a roof to his mouth and a voice that sounded like home.

Such are some of a bird-loving man's early spring pleasures in this Southern country. I do not mean to praise the season unduly. New England can beat it when the time comes; at least, I know one New Englander who thinks so; but not in March.

TEXAS AND ARIZONA

IN OLD SAN ANTONIO

After three days and four nights in a sleeping-car it is good to breathe air again. Not that I mean to speak ill of the modern necessity known in railway offices as a "sleeper"; it has done me too many a service; but, for all that, — though it is a bridge that has carried me over, — well, as I said, it is a luxury to breathe air again.

So I thought this January afternoon as I sat upon the top rail (a pretty thin board) of a tall fence at the summit of what I take to be one of the highest elevations (it would be exceeding the truth, perhaps, to call it a hill) in the immediate neighborhood of this venerable but young and vigorous Texas city, known in geographies and gazetteers as San Antonio, but among railroad men, with whom time and breath are precious, as "San Antone."

The city itself lay all before me, and an excellent showing it made, with its many stately and handsome buildings and its general air of prosperity; but for the most part my eyes traveled beyond it, or in other directions. The landscape

was wide, whichever way I turned, and the transparency of the atmosphere, of a kind never enjoyed in New England except on some half-dozen days in a year, made it the wider and more alluring. It surprised me to see imposing public buildings scattered about over the country. The nearest must have been several miles from the town, and each, so far as I could see, stood entirely by itself. Here and there, also, miles apart, were fine dwelling-houses, with outbuildings and windmills; each, like the public institutions just mentioned, standing alone, as if its proprietor were also the proprietor of the entire tract of country roundabout. Rich men's ranches, they should perhaps be called. All these, or most of them, would have been invisible from my fence-rail perch, but for the fact, which really made the strangeness of the whole spectacle to a New England man's eyes, that the rolling land is all unwooded — a broad landscape, stretching away and away, north, south, east, and west, and no forest! The slopes look, at a little distance, — just as the one on which I was now sitting had looked to me half a mile back, — as if they might be planted with young peach orchards. They are really covered loosely with wild shrubs ten or fifteen feet high, now budded and in pale green leaf (Huisache, I understand their Mexican

name to be,[1] though I may err in the spelling), with lower shrubs of different sorts, mostly thorny, scattered loosely among them, the whole constituting (or so I suppose) what is known in this part of the world as chaparral; which is very like what in our Northern country we speak of, less respectfully, as "scrub."

It is a godsend to a man on my errand, that chaparral, as it grows about San Antonio, at all events, is not a dense thicket. It can be walked through or ridden through in all directions with perfect ease, though one cannot keep a straight course for more than a rod or two together.

I had been strolling over exactly such a hill half an hour before, circling one cluster of shrubs after another, opera-glass in hand, on the alert for any bird that might show itself (it was likely as not to be a stranger), when all at once — how it came about I shall never be able to tell — there, just before me on the ground, twenty or thirty feet away, stood one of the birds that I had most desired to see in this novel Southwestern world — a road-runner. I have found some puzzles since my arrival at San Antonio, three days ago, but this was not one of them. As our good common saying is, the fellow looked "as natural

[1] *Vachellia Farnesiana*, sparingly naturalized in Florida, where it goes by the name of Opopanax.

as life." Mr. Fuertes's drawing had stepped out of the book. I could have shouted with pleasure.

The bird was true to his name. There was no road, to be sure, but he knew what was expected of him, and started off at once at a lively trot; then, within ten or fifteen feet, he stopped short, lifted his ridiculously long tail till it stood at right angles with his body, — the white "thumb-marks" at the ends of the feathers making a brave show, in spite of the almost indecent absurdity of his attitude, — and after a moment started on again. Two or three times he repeated these manœuvres; and then, without my knowing how he did it, he escaped me altogether, although the bit of shrubbery into which he had vanished was only a few feet in diameter. "Never mind," I thought, "I have seen him." And he was every whit as oddly behaved a piece as my fancy had painted him.

The road-runner, it should be said, is an overgrown member of the cuckoo family. Its length from the tip of its bill to the end of its tail is about two feet. It wears what may be described as a frightened-looking crest, its plumage is conspicuously mottled, and, what gives it its special character, its tail is a foot long. As Mrs. Bailey well says, it is "one of the most original and entertaining of Western birds. The newcomer

is amazed when the long-tailed creature darts out of the brush and races the horses down the road, easily keeping ahead as they trot, and when tired turns out into the brush and throws his tail over his back to stop himself."

My bird's performance was less theatrical than that, perhaps because I was on foot, perhaps because the day was Sunday, perhaps because of the absence of a thoroughfare; but I was well pleased.

It is noticeable how birds, not less than men, tend to become specialists. To accomplish one thing supremely well, — that is certainly the way to make one's self famous. And that is what the road-runner does. He has chosen a hobby, and he rides it. His legs are proportionally no longer than other birds', but that does not matter. Such as they are, he will make the most of them.

He is like a certain Maine farmer of whom I have heard, a plain tiller of the soil, who feels, nevertheless, that he was born for better things; not for a cart-horse, if you please, but for a race-horse. He may be working on his farm, at the plough, we will say; suddenly the impulse comes upon him, as inspiration is said to come upon a poet; there is nothing for it but he must start and run; and so he does. Once every summer he travels from Maine to Mount Washington, for the great event of the year. When he ap-

pears at the Summit House, every one knows what is to happen. So-and-so is going to run down the mountain. The daily newspaper chronicles his arrival and announces the hour of the annual event. Then, at the minute agreed upon, all hands gather before the door, a man appointed for the purpose holds the watch and gives the signal, and down the steep road starts the farmer, his invariable "tall hat" on his head, and his coat-tails flying. At the Half-Way House, and again at the base, his time is taken. If it is shorter than last year's, so much the more glory. If it is longer, — well, he has run; and presumably, like Cincinnatus before him, he goes back to his plough contented.

The road-runner, I suspect (the running cuckoo!), is subject to the same irresistible ambulatory impulses, and by a curious coincidence he, too, wears what we may term a "tall hat." I should like to see him racing down the Mount Washington road, putting on the brakes now and then, at the sharper turns, by a sudden cocking of his tail!

The temperature here — for temperature must always be mentioned in writing of one's travels — has thus far been pretty comfortable for a walker, though not without something of the contradictoriness which seems to belong to weather

conditions everywhere and always: roses in all the gardens, and steam in the radiators; children, black and white, paddling about in the mud barefooted and barelegged, and gentlemen with heavy overcoats on, and, not unlikely, collars turned up. Concerning such things, here in "San Antone," you take your choice. For myself I have compromised the matter, keeping my boots on and wearing, except when the sun has been more than commonly persuasive, the lightest of spring overcoats.

The great drawback to a walking man's comfort, and just now the most impressive "feature" of the city, — more impressive by far than the old Spanish missions, the most famous of which, the Alamo, is directly at my door, — has been the mud; deep and black, and more adhesive than glue. If you go outside the city your shoes gather it as a rolling snowball gathers snow ("to him that hath shall be given," you repeat to yourself), and it is like one of the labors of Hercules to get it off. I walk about, scuffing and kicking, with pounds of it on either overshoe, like a dark fringe, and fancy I know how it feels to drag a ball and chain. However, conditions are bettering in this respect, and in any case, things might easily be worse. Yesterday morning, seeing the sky clouded, I remarked to the elevator boy on

my way down to breakfast, that I believed it was going to rain; and I added, sententiously, "More rain, more mud." "Yes," said the boy, quick to resent an imputation upon the climate of Texas, "and the more rain, the better crops." The State, it appears, has suffered greatly from drought for the past few seasons, and no doubt its people can well afford to play the mud-lark for a week now and then in winter. It makes a difference whether you are a selfish, pleasure-seeking tourist, thinking only of to-day's comfort, or a man with his living to make out of a cotton plantation or a market garden.

For the present, if the tourist wishes, as I do, to walk in the country, he may do worse than betake himself to one of the numerous railroad tracks.[1] These have carried me into good places and shown me many interesting birds; but they would be more convenient if they were not walled in, mile after mile, except as a highway or a plantation road crosses them, by an excessively high and close barbed-wire fence. Yet even this hateful obstruction has served me one slight good turn.

A man of something like my own age and build

[1] Since this letter was first printed I have been warned more than once that walking upon railroad tracks, in the South-western country, at least, is an unsafe proceeding, for a man alone and unarmed; and I think it right to pass along the caution.

was trudging along the track in front of me, a day or two ago (by his gait and general appearance he was used to trudging), when I saw him approach the fence as if he meant in some way to force a passage. "You 'll never do it," I thought. Really, there seemed not to be space enough between the wires, even if they had not been barbed, for a human body to squeeze through; but to my astonishment the fellow slipped between them without the slightest fumbling or hesitation, and without so much as a barb's touching him. He must have been a specialist, I am sure. I could not have followed suit without tearing my clothing to tatters, if all the wealth of the East, "barbaric pearl and gold," had been spread out before my itching fingers on the farther side. I have not yet ceased wondering at the rogue's address. Such practice as he must have had! I hope he was never in jail. It was like the neatest of Japanese jugglery, or the famous passage through the eye of a needle. Behold, said I, the compensations of poverty. No rich man could have done it.

The greater part of the passengers that one meets in such out-of-the-way places are short, swarthy Mexicans. Usually they are able to bid you "good-morning," or to ask how you "do," but now and then you will hear a "*buenos dias.*"

In the city one finds them at every corner selling peculiar-looking confections. Whether one likes their wares or not, — and for myself, I must confess that "my own particular lip" has not yet made up its mind to try the experiment, — their presence gives one an agreeable sense of being far from home. Two days ago I was wandering about San Pedro Park at noon, and noticed for the first time a few butterflies on the wing. Most of them were much like our common yellow one, — evidently some species of Colias, — but by and by I noticed a dark one, showing a touch of red as it flew. I took chase, and came up with it just as it dropped to rest directly in front of two Mexicans seated upon the grass. I stepped near to see it (a common red admiral, for aught I could discover), and perceiving that the men were inquisitive, I pointed to it with my finger. One of them imitated the gesture, as much as to say "That, do you mean?" I nodded, and he said, with a smile, "*Mariposa.*" "Yes," said I, "a butterfly." That was beyond him, and he repeated his incomparably prettier word, "*mariposa.*" "Very good," said I to myself, "I am glad to find that I understand Spanish when I hear it spoken!" A solitary traveler, of all men, should know how to amuse himself with trifles.

A BIRD-GAZER'S PUZZLES

THE days of my youth have come back to me. I am again at the foot of the ladder, a boy in the primary school, a speller of a-b-abs. The experience is pleasant, but not unmixedly so; it is sweet, with a suggestion of bitter. I am finding out daily that one is never too old to be mistaken. I knew it before, of course; but I am still finding it out; for the two things are not incompatible. One may know a thing, and still have need to learn it. It is possible that the most erudite scholar has never more than begun to apprehend his own ignorance; nay, that he would never make more than a beginning in that salutary study were he to burn the midnight oil for a thousand years. In that time he might square the circle and discover the philosopher's stone, but he would not discover how little he knew. In that respect, in respect to what we do not know, human capacity is unlimited. Finite creatures that we are, we are endowed with a kind of negative infinity. And, for one, I wish to make the most of my greatest gift. It shall not be "lodged with me useless," if I can help it.

I saw a strange warbler the other day. That is to say, I thought I saw one. I had been wandering for a whole forenoon amid the chaparral just outside the city of San Antonio, and had enjoyed a good number of novel sensations, when suddenly (such things always come suddenly, but it seems necessary to repeat the word) a tiny bird moved in a low bush directly before me. "A gray warbler with no wing-marks," I said; and the next instant I saw that its crown was light yellow. It moved again, and the forward parts came into view. Its throat also was yellow. At that moment it was eating a yellow berry. Its ground color was near the shade worn by a juvenile chestnut-sided warbler, and the yellow of the crown and throat was very lightly laid on over the gray, so to express it, just as it is in the chestnut-side's case.

Now what kind of warbler can this be? I asked myself: a gray warbler with a yellow crown and a yellow throat, and no other adornments. And with the question there came into my mind, as by the effect of immediate inspiration, the word Calaveras. Whether it was Calaveras or something else, there could be no doubt of my being able to clear up the question, once I should have a book in my hand.

I resumed my peregrinations, therefore, the

bird having moved on, as birds do, being provided with wings for that very purpose, and by and by, walking at a venture round one clump of bushes after another, I came again upon the stranger, who, it should be said, was of a peculiarly unsuspicious disposition, and this time was swallowing piecemeal what seemed to my New England mind a very unseasonable caterpillar. And now I made a further discovery: the shoulder of the bird's wing was edged with a line of pretty bright red, of a shade between chestnut and carmine! Surely, it was only a matter of surviving to reach the hotel and the mystery would be solved. Calaveras or what not, it was impossible that there should be two warblers marked in this singular manner.

Well, I got back to my room, and sure enough, not only were there not two warblers thus marked, there was not even one. Calaveras was nothing to the purpose. My inspiration must have come from the wrong place. At any rate, it was unprofitable for instruction. It was n't far to go, you may say, but I was at my wits' end.

That evening I had occasion to answer a letter from an eminent ornithologist, who has herself worked much in the Southwest, and besides has at her elbow the best of American bird collections. She would be able to help me out of my

difficulty. In all innocence, therefore, I stated my case. It was possible, I admitted (thrice lucky admission — it is always politic to seem modest, however one may feel), that the bird was not a warbler, after all, though, if it were not, I had no idea what it could be.

Well, the next day I was out in the country again, this time in a pecan grove, with tall seed-bearing weeds standing by the acre under the tall, leafless trees (a paradise for sparrows), when I heard a chickadee whistling his four notes in the distance. "How closely his music resembles that of his relative as we hear it in Florida," I said to myself. And this reflection set me asking, "Where is that odd little titmouse, the verdin, that was said to be common about San Antonio at all seasons?" And then, like a flash, came the answer: "Why, man, that was a verdin you saw yesterday, out in the chaparral, and mistook for a warbler." And so it turned out. Red shoulder-strap and all, everything suited. The verdin, by the by, is a distinctively South-western species, not *Parus*, but *Auriparus*. My bird had been a female, I suppose, showing less yellow than her mate would have done. Perhaps if I had seen him instead of her, I should not have been so befooled.

No sooner was the puzzle thus satisfactorily

solved, than I began to meditate, with something less of satisfaction, upon the letter I had written the evening before. I thought, too, of the many more or less foolish letters that I had myself received (and sometimes smiled at, I fear) in the past twenty years, letters in which eager searchers after ornithological knowledge had confided to me marvelous accounts of the wonders they had seen afield, and by an unhappy fate could find no description of when they returned to the study. Not many of these correspondents, as well as I could now remember, had ever mistaken a titmouse for a warbler! I must dispatch a postscript to my letter by the earliest mail. And so I did, ostensibly, of course, to save my friend the trouble of a reply, but really to prove to her that, though I was capable of blundering, I was also capable of a second thought.

And now, having made my confession, I am bound to add that some who may laugh at me would possibly have been little wiser than I, had they stood in my shoes; for the verdin does not look the least in the world like anything that goes by the name of titmouse or chickadee up in our Northern country. I hope to see more of it, and especially to hear its song, which is said to be of surprising volume.

Really (and this is why I have told this not

very exciting tale at such length), it is the chief delight of bird-gazing in a strange country that one has to begin, as it were, all one's studies over again; as I have seen a professor of botany in similar circumstances fingering the leaves of the manual like the veriest schoolboy, as for the time being he was. It is not the proudest way of renewing one's youth, but it will answer. And conditions being as they are, nothing else will answer.

Such is my present case here in Texas. Even now, in the dead of winter, with the number of species greatly reduced, the novelties seen in one walk are so many that the man who uses no gun, and so can take no specimens home with him for inspection, is often put to his trumps when he comes to run over his day's notes. Though he may have done his best, he is certain to have overlooked or forgotten some detail which, with the book before him, turns out to be all important. What a pity he did not note with more exactness the proportion of white on the tail feathers, or the position of a certain black spot on the side of the head! He must go out again, and — if he is fortunate enough to find the bird — secure a stricter and more intelligent observation. It is plaguing fun, but it is fun, nevertheless, and good practice, besides; and withal, it leaves work for to-morrow.

It must be admitted, moreover, if the truth is to be told, — and it is sometimes better to tell it, — that no amount of observation in the field will be likely, in a month or two, at any rate, to settle all the nice questions that confront the student in a new region in these latter days; especially if the region happens to be, like this about San Antonio, one in which Eastern and Western forms of the same species are to be found overlapping each other. It was very well for Emerson to speak, poetically, of naming all the birds without a gun. He lived before the day of trinomials; or if that be not quite true, before our younger brood of ambitious closet ornithologists had set themselves so zealously at the work of dividing and subdividing. Time was when a song sparrow was a song sparrow, and there was an end of it. Now to call a bird by that name is only the beginning of sorrows. What kind of song sparrow is it? My Western handbook enumerates about fifteen sub-species, and the differences, I suspect, are many of them almost too fine for opera-glass determination. For what I know, a microscope might be more to the purpose.

The man who refuses a gun must accept the limitations that go with that refusal. Time and repeated observation will do much; a good ear will help — in some cases it will do the larger

half of the work; but he must not expect to accomplish with a glass and patience exactly what another man accomplishes with powder and shot and a pair of dividers. In the study of ornithology, as elsewhere, there are diversities of operations, and possibly not the same spirit.

If I cannot be certain whether the vesper sparrows I saw to-day were light-colored enough to pass for *Poœcetes gramineus confinis*, or were probably nothing but plain *Poœcetes gramineus*, I must put up with my ignorance, distressing as it is. Possibly, if I were to see species and subspecies side by side, even in the field, I could tell them apart; possibly I could not. Whether their songs differ, is a point concerning which my book, after the manner of books, has nothing to offer; and as the birds are now dumb, there is nothing for me to do but to call them vesper sparrows, and await developments.

And some things can be settled, even in Texas, with no weapon but a field-glass. I know, for example, that I have to-day seen Mexican goldfinches, and Arctic towhees, and red-shafted flickers. That is more than half a loaf, by a good deal, and several times better than no bread.

LUCK ON THE PRAIRIE

A WELL-GROOMED hobby will carry its rider comfortably over many a slough.

I was on my way westward to El Paso, and knowing that the train was due there before daylight, I left my berth early, and had gone out upon the porch of the observation car to catch a bite of fresh air and enjoy the first faint flushes of the dawn, when a train-hand, passing in the semi-darkness, informed me that the wreck of a freight train was on the track in front of us, and that we should probably not be able to move for eight or nine hours. I had noticed that we were standing still upon a "siding," but such halts are not infrequent on a single-track road, and having my mind upon pleasanter themes, I had passed the circumstance by without further thought.

The news of our trouble spread, as one passenger after another made his unhandsome, half-civilized appearance from behind the curtains, and though we proved to be a pretty philosophical company, as transcontinental travelers have need to be, the general run of comment was not hilarious.

A turn outside, as it grew lighter, showed that we were at a station called San Elizario (a pleasing name, surely), some three thousand two hundred feet above sea-level. The westerly breeze was a refreshment, and three or four ranges of jagged mountains glorified the horizon. If we must be delayed, the Fates had chosen a favorable place for us.

I, for one, soon began to feel reconciled to the turn affairs had taken, and went back to the car for an opera-glass. It must be a dull day in Texas when a tender-footed bird-gazer cannot find at least one novelty, and till the "first call for breakfast" I would be out trying my luck.

An adobe building, windowless and unoccupied, stood not far off, and near it was a cottonwood tree, still holding, in spite of all those Texas winds, part of its last season's crop of dry leaves. I walked in that direction, and at the moment three birds, with musical, goldfinch-like twitters, flew into the tree. A glance showed them to be not goldfinches, but small birds of the purple finch group, very bright and rosy (the two males), and thickly streaked underneath. "The house finch!" I exclaimed.

This is a Western beauty, greatly beloved for its color, its music, and its engaging familiarity, by all to whom it is a neighbor. I had read of

its charms, and had freshly in mind an enthusiastic eulogy of it by an old friend, now a resident of Colorado, whom I had chanced to fall in with a fortnight before in a railway car. With those three lovely creatures talking to me, I felt that the day was saved.

A Say's phœbe was near by, in a pear orchard (for the piece of prairie land on which we so unexpectedly found ourselves was under irrigation), and as I had met it first only forty-eight hours before — at Del Rio — I was glad to see more of its very demure and pretty habits, especially of its clever trick of hovering at considerable length just over the grass. The rather bright buff of its under-parts is one of its striking characteristics, and now, when I caught sight of it in the distance, I had for a moment thoughts of some unfamiliar kind of oriole.

There was barely time to pay my respects to the phœbe before a flash of blue wings made me aware of something more interesting still, a bevy of bluebirds. It would be good fortune, surely, if they should turn out to be of one of the several Western forms that I had never seen. I drew near, therefore, with all carefulness, and needed but one look to assure myself that such was indeed the case. Their backs were not blue, but of a chestnut shade. The blue of the wings,

moreover, was not quite the same as that of our common Eastern *Sialia*.

Whatever they were, the color of the backs would probably be enough to name them, and I returned to the car for breakfast and, first of all, to make sure of my new birds' identity. A consultation of the handbook showed it to be reasonably certain that they were of the sub-species *Sialia mexicana bairdi*, the chestnut-backed bluebird; but I had failed to observe one important mark: the throat should have been "purplish blue." I wished very much to see them again, but they had disappeared. Doubtless they were migrants or stragglers, and by this time were far away. A pity I had not been more painstaking while I had the opportunity. The one safe rule is to note everything, though it is a rule more easily laid down than lived up to, to be sure, especially in a new place, with many distractions. Anyhow, the birds must be of the chestnut-backed sub-species, I reassured myself, for the sufficient reason that it was impossible, here in western Texas, that they should be anything else.

Allaying my scruples thus, I started across a field toward a farmhouse, and on the way noticed a crow flying over. It was the first one I had seen since reaching San Antonio, — the chapar-

ral country not favoring birds of the crow-jay tribe,[1] — and I remarked it with pleasure. And then, remembering something I had lately read of Arizona, I thought, "But is it a crow, after all? Is n't it one of the white-necked ravens that are set down as so common and familiar in this part of the world?" And, in fact, it was; for the next moment it began calling in a voice that put the possibility of its being a common American crow, the only one that could possibly be met with in all this region, quite out of the account. Another new bird! The third within half an hour! Surely this was better than getting into El Paso on schedule time. Let El Paso wait. It would probably last the day out.

But the story was not yet done, for after a little the meadow larks, of which there were many in the fields (with large flocks of horned larks, also), began singing. I was disappointed in the song, of the beauty of which I had formed the most exalted expectations, but consoled myself with believing that the birds were not Western meadow larks proper, but the Texan sub-species; otherwise I must conclude that their voices were

[1] I could hardly believe it anything but an accidental omission when I noticed the total absence of jays, crows, and ravens from Mr. Attwater's list of the birds of San Antonio and vicinity. See *The Auk*, vol. ix, p. 229.

still somewhat winter-bound, or at least, not yet keyed up to concert pitch.

A sparrow hawk beside the farmhouse before mentioned allowed me to stand almost under his low tree before he took wing, and when at last he did so I had a feeling that he was rather surprisingly long. I thought nothing more of the matter at the moment, but later, discovering by a reference to the handbook that a variety of *Falco sparverius*, somewhat larger and with a longer tail, had been described from this region, I concluded it probable, not to say certain, that my impression had been correct, and that the bird was not my old acquaintance of the East, but *Falco sparverius deserticola*. That would make the new birds of the morning four instead of three.

All this while, it must be understood, there was always the possibility that the train might start at any moment, no positive information upon that point being obtainable, so that I could move about only within a narrowly limited area. For a man thus tethered I was doing pretty well, whatever my unornithological fellow-travelers might think of my peculiar movements and attitudes. And to increase my enthusiasm, as I turned to go back to the train for dinner, in crossing an irrigation ditch (now dry), bordered

with a dense thicket of low shrubs, I caught the tinkle of junco voices and presently a glimpse of white tail feathers. Now, then, since luck was the order of the day, it was as likely as not that these were not simple *Junco hyemalis*, such as I had found at San Antonio, but one of several Western kinds that might, for aught I was aware, be looked for hereabout.

And so it proved. The birds were amazingly shy and secretive, but with patience I had three or four of them under my glass one after another; and they were noticeably different from our Eastern junco, and belonged, as the book's description made clear, to the variety *Junco hyemalis connectens*, the intermediate junco, so (not very poetically) called.

I went to dinner with an excellent appetite, and afterward, the delay of the train still continuing, though with rumors that its end was near, I took one more turn in the field, and this time happened upon still another stranger, the handsomest of the day, so wonderfully handsome, though "handsome" is too cheap a word, that a man would have to go far to beat it — an Arizona *Pyrrhuloxia*; a bird — related to the cardinal grosbeak group — having no representative in the East. It would be a shame to attempt a description of it here at the end of a hurried

sketch, but it made a glorious sixth in my list of the day's findings. I shall see more of it, I trust, when I reach the territory to which it more distinctively belongs.

One other piece of good fortune I must not fail to chronicle, though I have omitted to do so in its proper place. Late in the forenoon, after I had given the bluebirds up for lost, I discovered them sitting, the six together, a lovely company, among the leaves of a cottonwood tree, as if they had taken shelter from the wind; and the book's description was borne out: their throats were "purplish blue."

The nine hours — for so long the embargo lasted — passed all too soon. If I could have had two or three hours of free wandering, who knows what other bright names I might have brought back? I went so far, indeed, as to inquire of the postmaster and variety storekeeper — a genial, smiling German — whether there was any place in the neighborhood where a stranger could be put up for the night; but he thought not, and advised me, not at all inhospitably, to stick to the train. And possibly, after all, I had found more rather than less for being compelled to beat a small space over again and again, instead of ranging farther afield. At all events, I had discovered a new use for ornithological enthusiasm,

and I might almost add for railway accidents. I do not expect to find many birdier places, no matter where my wanderings take me, than that piece of dry, winter-bleached prairie about San Elizario.

OVER THE BORDER

On my first morning at El Paso, where, by good luck, as already explained, I arrived nine or ten hours behind time, I made an early start for Juarez, the Mexican city on the opposite bank of the Rio Grande. As I waited for the car at the corner of the street, a rosy house finch stood on the top of a telegraph pole overhead, singing ecstatically. The pretty creature, it is evident, is very much at home in this bustling city, at least in winter, for I was hardly in my room on the afternoon of my arrival before I heard its warble, and looking out of the window beheld the bird perched upon the eaves of a building across the way, where more than once since then I have heard and seen it. I am sorry to add that the English sparrow, its most unworthy rival, is here also, though for the moment in small numbers.

When the car came along, it proved to be an open one.

"A rather cold morning for open cars," I said to the youthful conductor.

"Oh, we run open cars all winter," he answered. "But I suppose we don't mind the cold

so much," he continued, emphasizing the pronoun, "because we are out of doors all the time."

A Northern tenderfoot might naturally be less inured to frigidity, he seemed to imply; but I remarked that he wore the heaviest of overcoats with the collar up. Warm days (much like New England June), cool nights, clear skies, constant winds, dryness and dust — such is the January climate of El Paso, if my four days have given me a fair impression of its quality.

Presently we crossed a short bridge.

"Was that the river?" I asked my seatmate, a minute afterward, a sudden suspicion coming over me, though it seemed so absurd that I was half ashamed to betray it.

"Yes, sir; that was the Rio Grande. You 're in Mexico now," he answered.

Yes, and that must have been the Mexican Custom House officer whom I had seen step out of the door of a small building on the southern bank of the river and salute our conductor so politely. None of us looked like smugglers, I suppose. At all events, the car was not "held up," as happened at the other end of the bridge, a day or two later, while two rather boisterous young fellows on the rear seat made themselves merry over the attempt of Uncle Sam's official representative to collect a duty. International

travel, even in an electric street-car, is liable to complications.

As for the river, it was practically dry. Pedestrians were crossing it — to save toll — on a few small stepping-stones at a point where the current could not have been ten feet wide nor more than half of ten inches deep. My seatmate explained that so much water was drawn off above this point for irrigation purposes that the river had little left for its own use; and in fact, more than once afterward I saw its bed absolutely dry, so that even the stepping-stones had for the day gone out of business. Yet it is a real *rio grande*, for all that, and the life of a long, long strip of Texas.

Drought is the mark of this country. A friendly citizen (of whom, in my ignorance, I had inquired about "suburban trains"!) warned me earnestly against wandering far out of the town. If some Mexican did not kill me "for the sake of the clothes I had on" (an ignoble death, surely), I might get lost (an easy matter, by my adviser's tell), in which event, if nothing more serious happened to me, I should infallibly perish of thirst.

The car took me through the compact little *ciudad* (a five-minute passage, perhaps), and I struck out for the country, along the line of the

Mexican Central Railroad, in the direction of the mountains, heading my course for a cemetery out on the slope, in the midst of the chaparral. White-necked ravens were foraging beside the track, as little disturbed by human approach as so many English sparrows might have been. "How soon the strange becomes familiar!" I thought. I had never seen a white-necked raven (there is no whiteness visible,[1] the bird being a very imp of darkness to look at it) till less than twenty-four hours ago, and already I was passing it with something like indifference. I was far from indifferent, however, two afternoons later, when for the first time I watched a flock of several hundred soaring in mazy circles high overhead, after the manner of buzzards or sea-gulls.

No other birds showed themselves till I drew near the cemetery gate, when suddenly the bushes just in front, straight between me and the sun, were alive with sparrows. My eyes, dazzled as they were by the sunshine, caught sight of one lark bunting as the flock took wing. I must see more of it, — it was my first one, — and started eagerly in pursuit. But the creatures were timid

[1] True as a general statement; but once, at Tucson, I saw a bird standing on the top of a telegraph pole facing a pretty stiff breeze, which blew the feathers of the throat apart till they showed a snow-white spot as large as a silver dollar.

beyond all calculation, and though I pursued them with cautious haste for some distance, I could never come up with them. Wherever I looked, there was nothing but white-crowned sparrows; handsome birds, the sight of which is almost an event in Massachusetts, but so abundant in Texas at this time of the year — as Lincoln finches are, also — that I have begun to turn away from them as almost a nuisance. It becomes vexatious to a man in search of novelties when even an old favorite keeps itself too persistently under his glass. As the proverb has it, there is reason in all things.

While I was beating the chaparral over, still in search of those missing white wing-patches, I noticed a funeral procession coming from the city. Heading the cortege was what in a Massachusetts town would be called a "depot carriage." It served the purpose of a hearse, I suppose, and in it sat two men bareheaded. It seemed a neighborly and Christian act to accompany a brother mortal to the grave in this fraternal manner. The second carriage was an open buggy, drawn by a white horse.

These things I took note of while the procession was still a long way off (a military band, still farther away, at the barracks, no doubt, was playing a march), and meantime I went up

to the cemetery fence and looked over. The monuments were mostly, if not wholly, wooden crosses, with the ordinary run of affectionate epitaphs. A man, who appeared to be the keeper of the place, came out of the one house near at hand, and asked me something in Spanish, to which I replied in English. We were unable to communicate with each other till finally I said, "*No sabe.*" It was not precisely what I intended to tell him; but it was all one. He saw for himself that I spoke no Spanish, and with that left me to myself.

I returned to El Paso on foot, and as I reached the northern end of the bridge, walking, as it happened, on the far side of the road, with my overcoat on my arm, as careless as could be, I was hailed by an officer in uniform. I halted, and he approached. Then he waited. It was my place to speak first, as it seemed, and I began:

"Do you wish to inspect me?"

"Well, what did you buy in Mexico?" he asked.

"A postal card, and mailed it."

"Was that all you bought?"

"Yes."

"All right."

The souvenir postal-card industry, though comparatively infantile, is not "protected," it

appears, although, if I had brought the five-cents' worth away with me, I might, for aught I positively know, have been called upon for duty. The rights of American laboring men must by all means be looked after. To think what ruin might befall this great republic if its people, with all the rest of their freedom, should in some fit of madness insist upon the freedom to buy and sell!

That was three days ago. Since then I have been to Juarez twice, pushing a little farther each time into the country southward. On both visits I found lark buntings in plenty. They move about — and sit about — in peculiarly dense flocks. One such, that I saw this morning, might have numbered a thousand birds. If disturbed, they rise in a cloud, and on coming to rest again every one seems to desire a perch at the very tip of a bush. As they must all alight in the same one or two bunches of scrub, however, though there are hundreds of others exactly like them all about, there are by no means top seats enough to go round, and there is a deal of preliminary hovering, accompanied by a grand confusion of formless twittering, during which — the white patches of the quivering wings and outspread tails showing through — the spectacle is most animated and pleasing.

As for the city itself, it is squalid, but well worth a visit; having so strange and other-worldish a look that one seems to have crossed at least an ocean rather than a trickling streamlet. The white church; the little shops, with their curious wares; the game cocks in the street, tethered each by a yard of cord to a peg driven into the ground on the edge of the sidewalk, crowing defiance to each other, and regarded proudly by their owners, who now and then take them up in their arms, caressing them fondly, or shaking one in the face of another, to see the feathers of their necks bristle; the bust of Bonito Juarez in the fenced plaza, the bust itself of a size to adorn a parlor mantel, while the marble pedestal is ten or fifteen feet high and at least ten feet square at the base; the Spanish signboards and placards; best of all, the people themselves, men, women, and children — the children, some of them, half naked, even on a cold, windy forenoon, while the men saunter about, or lean against an adobe wall in the sun, wrapped in thick, bright-colored blankets (I shall think of a Mexican, as long as I live, as leaning against the side of a house) — all these go to make a memorable picture for a Yankee on his travels.

FIRST DAYS IN TUCSON

WHAT is more fickle than New England weather? Nothing, perhaps, or nothing inanimate, unless it be the weather of some Southern winter resort, say in Florida or Arizona.

I reached Tucson in the evening of January 31, a stop at El Paso having saved me from participation in a railroad accident, as a result of which many passengers (nobody knows how many) were burned to death. The first of February was bright and warm; so that in a long forenoon jaunt over the desert a very light overcoat quickly became burdensome. The next morning, therefore, it was left at home.

My course this time was into the valley of the Santa Cruz, where farmers live by irrigation and barley fields are already green. I had crossed the river, pausing on the bridge to enjoy the sight of my first black phœbe, — a handsome, highly presentable fellow with a jet-black waistcoat, — when all at once the dusty road before me was seen to be fast becoming inundated. Beside the fence, wading in mud and water, the owner of the fields, having taken up arms — a

long-handled spade — against this sea of troubles, appeared to have been working hard to repair the mischief. At that moment, however, he had given over the attempt in despair and was lifting his boots, first one, then the other, out of the mire and scraping them, rather ineffectually, with the spade.

I ought to have known better, but it is easy to see the comical side of other people's misfortunes, and I remarked in a cheerful tone:

"Well, well, you seem to have water to burn."

Thereupon other floodgates were opened, and out poured a stream of language, the greater part of it too "colloquial" for print. The substance of it all was that a Mexican (the opprobrious word being dwelt upon and forcibly qualified) had come in the night and let on the water, without giving him, the farmer, any notice of the unseasonable action. Now the water was all over the road, and all over the yard, and close up to the back door of the house. He had sent for a man to help him.

Seeing nothing better to do, I picked my steps among the dust-bounded streams as best I was able, and passed by on the other side. I had always understood irrigation to be a kind of predictable and controllable rain, but it appeared that, if this were the rule, the rule had exceptions.

The sight set me thinking that possibly if the general management of the weather were put into human hands, as the least presumptuous of us are more or less in the habit of wishing were possible, it might still be found difficult to escape an occasional fault of administration. As for my farmer's emphatic language, I held it excusable. He certainly had provocation, and as the Scripture says, with commendable toleration, there is a time for everything under the sun.

The river valley is narrow, like the river itself, and on the farther side is bounded sharply by steep foothills, behind which are high mountains. I was barely beginning to climb the nearest hill, over its loose covering of small stones, when some bird broke into voice a little above me; one of those peculiar voices, I said to myself, that at a first hearing afford almost no indication as to the size of their owners.

My uncertainty lasted for some minutes, while I made my way cautiously upwards, a step or two at a time. The bird proved to be a small wren, — the rock wren, so called, — said to be "more or less abundant" in this region; "more" rather than "less," I hope, for I fell in love with the creature immediately.

One of the birds, — for there were two, talking "back and forth," as we say, — his fit of

nervousness over, dropped into a lyrical mood, and regaled me with a very pleasing bit of simple music, all in brief phrases, but with a surprisingly wide range of pitch. Some of the measures had a peculiar vibrant quality suggestive of the finest work of our common Eastern snowbird. But withal, I received the impression that the musician was rather trying his instrument than aiming at a serious performance.

While I stood listening, a bunch of a dozen Mexican house finches, more than half the number in rosy plumage, happened along with the usual chorus of twitters, and alighted in a very peculiar and graceful shrub (*ocotillo*, I am told is its Mexican name), which grows in clusters of a dozen or so of slender, angular stems, leaning away from one another in all directions and covered sparsely with reddish leaves, which look for all the world like the autumnal foliage of the common barberry. The rosy finches, perched upon this group of slanting, wandlike, fountain-like stems,[1] were exceedingly pretty to look at.

All about me stood tall, fluted columns of the giant cactus, fifteen or twenty feet in height, and

[1] Botanically, if I am correctly informed, the plant is *Fouquiera splendens*, otherwise known as candlewood, Jacob's staff, and coach-whip. Like the giant cactus it seems to be restricted to the foothills.

large enough for telegraph poles. On the day before, my first day in the city, I had turned a field-glass in this direction, and to my surprise had seen the hills covered with verdure. "Why," said I, noticing what I took for the trunks of trees amid the green, "those hills are forested." Now I discovered that the greenness was mostly that of the desert-loving creosote bush (a low shrub, noticeable for being thornless, which covers thousands on thousands of acres hereabouts, and just now is putting forth small yellow blossoms), while the boles of trees were nothing but giant cacti.

Among the stones at my feet grew flowers of various unknown sorts, especially a large yellow one, apparently an evening primrose, rising no more than two inches from the ground, with a tuft of leaves at the base of the stem, or rather at the bottom of the calyx. The only flower of them all that I could certainly name was a pretty blue lupine, smaller than our New England species, both in blossom and leaf, but so exactly like it in other respects that for old acquaintance' sake, though the lupine was never one of my particular favorites, I plucked it for my buttonhole. I believe it is the only natural-looking, familiar-looking wild plant that I have so far seen in this desert country.

The wrens having become silent, and the finches flown away, I descended the hill and took the road running along its base northward. It must lead, I thought, to another road across the valley, and would make a round of my forenoon's walk. And so it did; but first it brought me to a large building which proved to be St. Mary's Sanatorium, more commonly known as the Sisters' Hospital. I had just passed this and turned the corner, facing the town, when all in a moment, so far at least as my perception of events was concerned, the sky was covered with black clouds, and an icy north wind changed the day from summer to winter as in the twinkling of an eye.

No more loitering by the way. I did at once what every other creature was already doing — I hurried. "Now if I only had that overcoat!" I thought; but speed also is an extra garment, and I put it on.

No more loitering, I said; but I did stop once. Halfway across the valley a flock of blackbirds were feeding beside a barn, and I turned into the yard to look at them.

"I want to see what kind of blackbirds these are," I explained to the man of the house, who came out of the door at that moment.

"Oh, they 're the same kind that is all over the universe," he answered, smiling.

But his generalization was hasty, as generalizations are apt to be. They were Brewer's blackbirds — the handsomest of grackles; birds that I had seen for the first time, at Del Rio, only the week before. I did not stay to admire their iridescence, but declining an invitation to ride (it was too cold for that, though the man was just going to harness up, he said), I buttoned another button and hastened on. The two or three persons I met each had something to say about the weather, but nobody stopped for prolonged comment. Short speeches and quick steps, or another crack at the mule, were the order of the day. Even at the South a man will generally hurry a little rather than freeze to death.

Well, the experience was more amusing than uncomfortable, after all, and I reached the hotel door just as rain began falling. Before night snow was mingled with the rain, and the next morning I saw a small boy, his eyes dancing with brightness, making a tiny snow image to stand upon the front-yard fence, while the mountains — that fairly surround the city, as they do the Holy City in the Hebrew psalm — were dazzling white. The mud was beyond belief, the walking laborious; but as I paused now and then for breath or to recover my footing, and saw all that glory about me, I thanked my stars that I was

here. I was glad to see that even in this arid zone (*arida zona*, as the Mexicans are supposed to have begun by calling it) it still knew how both to rain and to snow.

"Well, now, this was a surprise, was n't it?" I remarked to a German whom I met in the valley road.

"You bet," he answered; and then, with a smile, he added: "but it won't last only a couple of days; that 's all."

His mastery of American idiom recalls what another German farmer said on the same forenoon. He had been living here and in California since '82, he told me.

"Which place do you like best?" I inquired.

"Oh, Arizona," he answered, without hesitation. "Things are freer here," he went on. "In Los Angeles, now, you have to dress up once in a while; but here, if you dress up, or if you don't dress up, it don't cut no ice."

My first man's confident "couple of days" was a trifle too confident. Twice two days have passed. In that time we have had summer weather (at noon), a pretty hard freeze (at night), and another rain and another snowfall, both heavier than the first.

The winter visitors, of whom there are many, the greater part, alas, ordered here for "lung

trouble," have naturally been put out, — the more recent arrivals among them greatly astonished; they thought they were coming to a dry climate; but the residents proper, if not jubilant, have seemed at least reasonably well contented with the turn of affairs. There has been a general agreement, to be sure (one heard it on all hands), that it was "pretty muddy;" the wayfaring man, though a fool, could not dispute the statement; but so far as the prosperity of Arizona is concerned, there is no probability of an excessive rainfall. The more the better. So much is evident, even to an itinerant ornithologist, who may stand, if you will, for the wayfaring man before mentioned. What is not so clear to his darkened understanding is why the weather, no matter where one goes, should be every season so strangely exceptional, so utterly different from everything that the oldest inhabitant can remember.

MOBBED IN ARIZONA

I HAVE never known a city more orderly seeming, more evidently peaceful and law-abiding than Tucson. Nowhere have I felt safer in wandering about by myself in all sorts of places, whether within the city proper or in the surrounding country. Here is a town, I have said to myself, where the citizen has small need of the policeman. And yet I know a man, most discreet and inoffensive (not to be shame-faced about it, let me admit that I speak of the bird-gazer himself), who a few days ago, for no assignable reason, was violently set upon, or, to speak plainly, mobbed, just outside the city limits.

Tucson, it should be premised, is a thriving, rapidly growing, modern city — though it has an antiquity to boast of, as well — in the midst of a desert. Its own site was originally part of the desert. The nearest large city is Los Angeles, California, five hundred miles distant; the nearest village, from what I hear, must be fifty or sixty miles away. Many roads run out of the town, but only to ranches scattered here and

there along the two watercourses, or to mining camps farther off in the mountains. How a city ever came to grow up in a place so isolated, so seemingly destitute of anything like local advantages, is a riddle beyond my reading; but here it is, a city in the desert. North, south, east, or west, you may start where you will and go in what direction you please, and in fifteen minutes you will be out among the creosote bushes and the cacti, with nothing but a world of creosote and cactus — with perhaps a windmill and a roof rising above them somewhere in the distance — between you and the mountain range that bounds the horizon.

Well, this was exactly what I myself did one fine morning a week ago. I walked up the main street of the city, turned to the right, passed the territorial university buildings, and, taking a course northward toward the Santa Catalinas, sauntered carelessly forward, field-glass in hand, to see what might be stirring in the chaparral.

There would not be much, I knew. By daylight, at least, and in the winter season, the desert is not a stirring place. In the tracts where the creosote occupies the ground alone there proved, as usual, to be nothing; but presently I came to a place where two or three kinds of cactus were sprinkled among the creosote

bushes, and newly sprung bluish-green grass (I call it grass, provisionally, although, like almost everything else hereabout, it has an unaccustomed look) carpeted or half-carpeted the ground. Here were the almost inevitable two cactus wrens (how overjoyed I was at the unexpected sight of my first one, at San Antonio, only three weeks ago, and how soon they have become an old story!) perched, one here, one there, at the top of branching cactus trees five or six feet high, calling antiphonally, as their habit is, in a coarse, unmusical, wearisome voice — the same churlish phrase over and over and over. Nothing but the lonesomeness of the desert, surely, could ever make that grating, repetitive monotony a pleasure-giving sound. What the birds will do in the way of song when their musical season arrives, if it ever does,[1] is more than I know; but, belonging to so musical a family, they ought to be capable of something better than this, for music, of all gifts, is a thing that runs in the blood. It would be a strange wren that could not express his happiness in some really lyrical manner.

In the same neighborhood, as has happened on several occasions, were a group of five or six sage thrashers. It was in this very place, indeed, that

[1] Alas, it never does.

I first formed their acquaintance; and a sorely puzzled novelty-seeker I was on that eventful afternoon. The whole desert had seemed to be devoid of animal existence, I remember, when of a sudden there stood those strange birds on the ground before me. At the first instant they gave me an impression of overgrown titlarks. Then, when I watched them running at full speed over the grass, all at once pulling themselves up and standing erect with a snap of the tail, I said: "Why, they must be thrushes of some sort." In attitude and action they were almost exactly like so many robins. The only striking characteristic of their plumage was the peculiarly dense streaking of the under parts.

The mystery was heightened for me by the fact that they maintained an absolute silence. Indeed, although I have seen them many times since then, I have yet to hear them utter the first syllable. For aught I can positively affirm, they may every one be mutes. I chased them about for half an hour, scrutinizing the least detail of their dress, all the while wondering what on earth to call them, till finally it came over me, I could never tell how, that they must be sage thrashers.

"Yes," I said, "*Oroscoptes!* I remember that that bird is described as having a short bill."

It was a true guess; and in a strange country a man makes so many poor guesses that he may reasonably boast a little over every good one. To this day, I am bound to add, the birds, with their short bills, their extraordinary quickness upon their feet, and their upright carriage, have to my eye very little the appearance of thrashers. Perhaps when I hear them sing, my feeling may alter.

There is at least one real thrasher in the desert, however, and usually in the same places that Oroscoptes affects, places such as I have mentioned, where cacti are mingled with the omnipresent creosote. This is Palmer's thrasher, so called, a grayish-brown bird, with the characteristic thrasher make-up — long bill, long body, and long tail. He is one of the common birds about Tucson, both in the river valley and on the desert, and one of the few that are already in song. Even he, I suspect, is not really letting himself go as yet, but he is in tune daily; not so versatile a performer, seemingly, as our Eastern reddish-brown bird; with much less range of voice, and more given to repeating the same phrase half a dozen times in succession, so that his music has less the air of a strict improvisation; but a genuine thrasher, nevertheless, with a thrasher's song. As the season progresses he

will probably grow more ecstatic, though to hear him now, one would not expect him ever to become so mad a rhapsodist as the crazy bird that we admire, and sometimes smile at, in the Eastern country.

Whether the thrasher was seen on the day I am supposed to be describing, I do not now remember, but in all probability he was, for I never walk far in the desert without seeing or hearing him. If he does not sing, he salutes me with volleys of sharp, whip-snapping whistles in the style of the wood thrush and the robin. Like the wren, he prefers a perch at the top of a cactus. He prefers it, I say; but in truth it is almost Hobson's choice with him, since the topmost spray of a creosote bush, the only other thing he *could* perch on, would hardly support his weight. There he stands, at all events, perfectly at his ease among the closely set spines, sharp as the sharpest needles, though how he manages the ticklish feat so adroitly is more than I can imagine.

I may have seen two or three desert sparrows, also; the black-throated sparrow, that is, with some slight variations, imperceptible in the bush, that make him, in the language of science, *Amphispiza bilineata deserticola*; and possibly, though this is somewhat less to be taken for

granted, his long-tailed relative, the sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli nevadensis*), may have teased me by his shyness. Both these birds are said to be famous enliveners of the desert, — though neither of them in their present silent state quite lives up to his reputation, — and will doubtless become prime favorites with me if I remain here long enough really to know them. Where should simple, hearty melodies find appreciation, if not in the desert?

I am slow in coming to the point of my story; and with reason. It is not pleasant to be mobbed; there is nothing to boast of in such an adventure; nothing to flatter one's sense of personal importance; one is not apt to speak of it *con amore*, as we say. Some things are best slipped over in silence. So I have noticed that men who have served their country in prison will always contrive by one path or another to go round the name of that unpopular institution. But I have begun, and there is nothing for it but to finish.

Well, then, I had walked perhaps a mile and a half beyond the university buildings, which is the same as to say beyond the limits of the town, and found myself approaching a lonely ranch, when a flock of ravens, white-necked ravens, which abound hereabout — "the multitudinous

raven," I have caught myself saying[1] — rose from the scrub not far in advance, with the invariable hoarse chorus of *quark, quark.* I thought nothing of it, the sight being so much an every-day matter, till after a little I began to be aware that the whole flock seemed to be concentrating its attention upon my unsuspecting, inoffensive self. There must have been fifty of the big black birds. Round and round they went in circles, just above my head, moving forward as I moved, vociferating every one as he came near, "quark, quark."

At first I was amused; it was something new and interesting. I recalled the time when I walked miles on miles over the North Carolina mountains in hope of seeing one raven, and here were half a hundred almost within hand's reach; I chaffed them as they passed, calling them names and quarking back to them in derision. But before very long the novelty of the thing wore off; the persecution grew tiresome. Enough is as good as a feast; and I had had enough. "Quark, quark," they yelled, all the while settling nearer, — or so I fancied, — till it seemed as if they

[1] There is another raven in Arizona, rarer and larger, — a *real* raven, so to speak, — but I saw it only a few times, always high in air, as if it were passing from one mountain range to another.

actually meant violence. They were doing precisely what a flock of crows does to an owl or a hawk: they were mobbing me. "Quark, quark! Hit him, there! Hit him! Pick his eyes out!"

The commotion lasted for at least half a mile. Then the birds wearied of it, and went off about their business. All but one of them, I mean to say. He had no such notion. For ten minutes longer he stayed by. His persistency was devilish. It became almost unbearable. The single voice was more exasperating even than the chorus. If the famous albatross carried on after any such outrageous fashion, I have no stones to throw at the Ancient Mariner. He acted well within his rights. If I had had a crossbow, and had been as good a marksman as he was, — with "his glittering eye," — there would have been one less raven in Arizona, and no questions asked. If a dead calm had succeeded, so much the better. "Quark, quark!" the black villain cried, wagging his impish head, and swooping low to spit the insult into my ear.

But all things have an end, as leaves have their time to fall, and even a raven's perseverance will wear out at last. Perhaps the bird grew hungry. At all events he gave over the assault, stillness fell upon the desert, and an

innocent foot-passenger went on his way in peace.

And this is how I was mobbed in Arizona. I could never have believed it.

AN IDLE AFTERNOON

I HAVE heard of a man who invariably begins his letters, whether of friendship or business, with a bulletin of the day's weather: it rains, or it shines; it is cold or warm; and to my way of thinking it is far from certain that the custom is not commendable. It is fair to sender and receiver alike that the mental conditions under which an epistle is written should be understood; and there is no man — or no ordinary man, such as most of us have the happiness to deal with — whose thoughts and language are not more or less colored by those skyey influences the sum of which we designate by the interrogative name of weather. I say "interrogative," because I assume, although, having no dictionary by me, I cannot verify the assumption, that the word "weather" is only a corruption or variant of the older word "whether;" the thing itself being an entity so variable and doubtful that remarks about it fall naturally, and almost of necessity, into a discussion of probabilities, in other words, of "whether."

As to the weather here in Tucson, I could fill

all my letters with it, and still leave a world of things unsaid. Its fluctuations are so constant that they tend to become monotonous; as Thoreau said of one of his Concord days, that it was so wet you might almost call it dry.

Three or four mornings ago, for example, I started early for a seven-mile tramp across the desert. I wore overcoat and woolen gloves, and needed them. It was so cool, indeed, that I left word for an extra garment to be put into the carriage that was to come out and fetch me back at noon.

That same afternoon I walked down into the valley of the Santa Cruz. The sun was blazing, and the heat intense. The few cottonwood trees scattered along the road were still leafless (I had left my umbrella at home—for the last time) and the only shelter to be found was on the north-easterly side of the telegraph poles. I believe I never before complained of such obstructions that they were not big enough; but everything comes round in its turn. My thoughts ran back to the time when a boy of my acquaintance used to trudge homeward from berry-picking excursions on burning July noons. Also I thought of that comfortable Hebrew text about the "shadow of a great rock in a weary land." The man who wrote that might have lived in Arizona.

Finally, out of sheer desperation, I stepped into the yard of a little adobe house, and being obliged to walk almost to the door, said to the motherly-looking woman who came forward to see what was wanted, "Excuse me, please, but I only wish to stand a few minutes in the shade of your house." She looked surprised, as well she might. No doubt she took me for an invalid, as Arizona people say, a "lunger." Probably, sitting indoors, and used to summer temperature in these parts, she had been thinking of the day as rather cool, not to say wintry. Would n't I come in and sit awhile? She was sure I should be welcome. But I answered no; I only desired to stand a few minutes in the shade. And two or three hours afterward, within five minutes after the sun went down, — though it had been shining in at my west window, — I needed a fire.

Forty-eight hours later we had a snowfall, — the third within ten days, — the whole world white, with "storm rubbers" barely equal to the emergency; and the next morning, the snow having gone, ice was thick in a big tub of water outside my door.

"Cold?" said an Illinois gentleman, with whom I fell into conversation yesterday, "I 've been here three weeks, and in that time I 've suffered more from cold than in all my forty years."

I suspect that he exaggerated. For my own part, I have n't suffered from cold. It is the occasional heat that makes me fearful of homesickness. Three days like that one afternoon would set me packing. All of which may seem not very important to a chance reader ; but unless he is of a hopelessly unimaginative turn he can perhaps conceive how interesting and important it must be to the parties directly concerned, especially if he remembers that this is a winter resort, where weather is the one thing needful.

But what a perfect afternoon we had yesterday! — cool, yet not too cool; and warm, yet not too warm; with a softness and yet a gently bracing, uplifting, pulse-quickening, life-reviving quality in the air; and the sky, too, clear, but not too clear, so that wisps of cloud floated here and there over the bare, steep sides of the Santa Catalinas, giving them beauty. I was out upon the desert in a mood of absolute indolence, contented to walk a mile an hour, and breathe and breathe, and look. At such times it seems hardly too much to say, strange as the words may sound, that I am falling in love with the desert, a desert bounded only by mountains. Already I can believe that men are fascinated by it (the right men), and having once been here cannot long stay away.

Looking and dreaming, the bird-gazer within me pretty well laid asleep, suddenly I heard a strange voice in the air, thin, insect-like, unknown. By the time it had sounded twice the sleeper was wide-awake, with his opera-glass in play. The voice came from yonder thin clump of creosote bushes. Yes, the bird flits into sight — a gnatcatcher; and being a gnatcatcher, with such a note, it must be "the other one," known as the plumbeous, which I have been looking for ever since my arrival in Tucson. And so it was — a pretty creature with a jaunty black cap. I shall know him henceforth, I hope, even without seeing him. We are fortunate, both of us, I take leave to say, to have made each other's acquaintance on so ideal an afternoon.

The gnatcatcher disappeared, and the dreamer was just dozing off again, when two large birds were seen to be having a hot encounter high overhead. This time the field-glass came into requisition. A raven was teasing a red-tailed hawk, with all a raven's pertinacity and spite. Again and again and again he swooped upon him, while the hawk ducked and turned to avoid the stroke. Why the big fellow, biggest of all our hawks, larger and stronger in every way than the raven, did not face his tormentor and lay him out was a mystery. I confess, I should have been glad to

see him do it. Instead, he made off toward the mountains, and after a long chase and much croaking, the raven turned away.

This also had passed out of mind, and I was on my way homeward, barely putting one foot before the other, enjoying the air and the sun, — and the mountains, — when, happening to glance upward, I beheld a grand sight. "That 's the golden eagle," I said aloud (in the desert a man soon falls into the neighborly habit of talking to himself), and one look through the field-glass proved the words correct. The great bird was in perfect light, sailing in circles, so that his upper parts came every minute into full view as he swung about, the old gold of the head and neck, as well as the contrasted brown and black of the wings, perfectly displayed, with nothing left for guesswork. I was all eyes, and watched him and watched him, admiring especially the firm set of his wings, till he, too, sailed away, not chased, but moving of his own royal will, and dropped at last out of sight behind the rolling desert.

He was my first golden eagle, in some respects one of the noblest of all North American birds. I knew him to be not uncommon in the mountains, and had hoped some day to see him passing, especially when I should be far out on the edge of

the foothills; and behold, here he was on my idle afternoon, close at home. Who says that the lame and the lazy are not provided for?

My dreamy saunter was turning out ornithological in spite of myself, and as if the gnatcatcher and the eagle had not done enough to that end, the ubiquitous raven now took a hand at the business. My thoughts were just settling back into vacancy, when the ravens were seen to be commencing their regular afternoon progress to their roosting grounds, wherever those may be, on the other side of the city. A detachment of some scores was already on the move. And presently I observed what was to me a strange and interesting thing, although, for aught I can affirm to the contrary, it may be only an every-day occurrence.

A great part of the birds were playing by twos, one chasing the other, as if engaged in a frolic to which all parties were perfectly accustomed. I had not expected such a pitch of levity on the part of these black-suited, and as I should have thought, rather gloomy-natured scavengers. But they were going to roost, and like children at the hour of bedtime, they were making a lark of it. Perhaps the day's picking had been uncommonly good; they had been over by a certain cattle-slaughtering establishment; something, at all

events, had put them in high spirits, and so Tom was having it out with Dick, and Bob with Harry. To look at them, it seemed as much fun as a pillow-fight, and as I have said, the greater part of the flock were engaged in it.

But the point I started to speak of was not the game itself, but a certain acrobatic feat by which it was accompanied. Again and again, in the course of their doublings and duckings, I saw the birds turn what looked to be a complete sidewise somersault. It may have been an optical illusion; probably it was; but if so, it was absolute. Sure I am that more than once I saw a bird flat on his back in the air (as flat on his back as ever a swimmer was in water), and to all appearance, as I say, he did not turn back, but came up like a flash on the other side. Fact or illusion, clean over or halfway over, it was a clever trick, and I could not wonder that the birds seemed to take pleasure in its repetition. I imagined they were as proud of it as a young gymnast ever was of his newly acquired back handspring. And why not? A man must be extremely well contented with himself, or possess a feeble imagination, not to feel sometimes a twinge of envy at sight of a bird's superiorities.[1]

[1] The trick was seen to fuller advantage on subsequent occasions, and I came to the settled conclusion that the birds turned

And while one flock of ravens were playing "it" in this brilliant fashion, another and larger flock were sailing in mazy circles after the manner of sea-gulls; a fascinating spectacle, to be witnessed here every afternoon by any who will be at the trouble to look up. More than once I have watched hundreds of the birds thus engaged, not all at the same elevation, be it understood, but circle above circle — a kind of Jacob's ladder — till the top ones were almost at heaven's gate. It is a good time to be out on the desert when the ravens are going to roost. And what with their soarings and tumblings, I have begun to think that perhaps the big hawk was not such an absolute fool, after all, to decline an aerial combat. The white-necked raven may be only a little larger kind of crow, but he is a wonder on the wing.

but halfway over; that is to say, they lay on their backs for an instant, and then, as by the recoil of a spring, recovered themselves. How they acquired the trick, and for what purpose they practice it, are questions beyond my answering. Since my return home, indeed, I have discovered that Gilbert White, who noted so many things, noted this same habit on the part of the European raven. According to him, the birds "lose the centre of gravity" while "scratching themselves with one foot." How he knows this he does not inform us, and I must confess myself unconvinced.

SHY LIFE IN THE DESERT

After the desert and the mountains, and some of the longer-desired birds, I have enjoyed few sights in Arizona more than that of two coyotes. Old beaters about the wilds of this Western country will be ready to scoff, I dare say, at so simple a confession. "Two coyotes, indeed! A great sight, that!" So I think I hear them saying. Well, they are welcome to their fun. It is kindly ordered, the world being mostly a dull place, that men shall be mutually amusing, and there is no great harm in being laughed at, provided it be done behind one's back.

The fact remains, then, as I state it. To me the coyotes were very interesting and unexpected beasts. And the pleasure of my encounter with them was heightened materially (this, too, is a laughable admission; I know it as well as anybody), when I learned that hereabouts, whatever may be true elsewhere, it was to be esteemed a piece of rather extraordinary luck, unlikely to be soon repeated. To all men of science, though they be nothing but amateurs and dabsters, rarity is one of the cardinal virtues of a specimen.

My good fortune, be it accounted greater or less, came about in this way.

Six or seven miles across the desert, where the plain comes to an end at the buried Rillito River, and the foothills of the Catalinas begin to rise from the opposite bank, are the adobe ruins (hospital, barracks, and what not) of Old Camp Lowell, a relic of the Apache wars. I had heard of the place (in fact, I had been happy enough to meet a young man who is camping there with his brother), and started early one morning to visit it.

Perhaps it was because of the earliness of the hour, though the sun was well above the horizon; at any rate, I had gone but a short distance before my steps were arrested by the sight of a gray, long-legged, wolfish-looking animal not far ahead. He had seen me first, I think (strange if he had not, so alert as every motion showed him to be), and was already considering his course of action, starting away, then stopping to look back. My glass covered him at once (he was easily within gunshot), and then, following a turn of his head, I saw that he had a companion. The second one had already crossed the trail, and the question between the two seemed to be whether he should come back or the other should follow him. The point was quickly de-

cided; the second one recrossed the trail, and the two ran off among the creosote clumps on the left, and in a few seconds were lost; but the hesitation had given me time to note their color, size, build (especially their long, sharp, collie-shaped noses), and their general appearance and action, all very "doggy."

This, as I have said, was but a little way beyond the university buildings, and, knowing no better, I assumed the occurrence to be a common one, and spoke of it in a matter-of-fact tone to the campers at the fort. They exclaimed at once that I had been surprisingly fortunate; they themselves, passing their days and nights in the desert, seldom or never saw one of the animals, though they often heard them barking after dark. The circumstantiality of my description, and it may be their politeness, — for they were gentlemen, "baching it" here for the older brother's health, — made it impossible for them to suggest a doubt as to the identity of the animals; but I had no difficulty in perceiving that if I wished to pass as a man of veracity among ordinary dwellers hereabouts I must not see coyotes too frequently. In point of fact, the very next man to whom I mentioned the circumstance, a man who has lived here for several years, on the rim of the desert, answered promptly:

"They were n't jack rabbits, were they?" He had never seen a coyote in Arizona, he said, though he had seen plenty in Colorado.

As for the big jack rabbits, if I have not seen "plenty" of them (and I cannot truthfully profess so much as that), I have seen a good many. One cannot walk far in the desert, with his eyes ranging, without discovering, to right or left or in advance, a pair of long ears, followed by a black tail, making quick time out of sight. Generally the creatures seem to run by fits and starts ("leaps and bounds and sudden stops" would express it), but the other morning a fellow had evidently been frightened almost out of his five senses by something — not by me — when a long way from home. There were no stops in his schedule. Straight across the desert he bounded, going like an express train — a mile a minute at the very least.

So lively as these large rabbits are (there is a smaller kind that I have not yet seen[1]) they would be as interesting as the much larger coyotes but for their greater commonness. For grace and lightness, as well as speed, their gait is next to flying. All the words in the dictionary

[1] They are not to be found on the desert, I afterward learned, but along the watercourses. There I often saw them.

could not describe it. I never see one on the move without admiration and an impulse to give him three cheers. Surely, man is a slow coach, and a race-horse is clumsy.

To one who comes this way for the first time in winter, as I have come (and may Heaven save me from ever being here in summer, so long at least as I am in an embodied state!), the desert seems thinly inhabited. Of the scarcity of bird-life upon it I have before spoken; and the reason is obvious: there is little here for birds to feed upon. The smaller quadrupeds, too, are of surprising infrequency. Once in a long while a striped squirrel, as I should call it, with its tail over its back, will be seen squatting beside a hole in the ground, ready to slip into it long before you can get near; and somewhat oftener a gray, rat-tailed, big-eyed squirrel (if it *is* a squirrel — I have only half seen it) will dart across an open space, tail in air, barely visible before it, too, has ducked into its burrow; but two or three such small fry, with as many jack rabbits, in the course of a half-day tramp, do not go far toward constituting anything to be accounted populousness.

One morning I walked out upon the desert immediately after a snowfall. It would be a favorable time, I thought, to study zoölogical hiero-

glyphics; and I believe I walked a mile before I saw a single footprint. Think of doing that, or anything like it, in our poor, frost-bitten, winter-killed, over-civilized New England! The tracks would have been a perfect crisscross.

And, notwithstanding all this, footprints or no footprints, the desert is not without its own world of little people. It is a desert only to our dull, provincial, self-absorbed, self-sufficient, narrow-minded, egotistical human apprehension of it. So much ought to be plain as day to the most undiscerning traveler; for if he so much as looks where he steps (lest a snake should bite him), he cannot help seeing that the ground all about is almost as full of holes as a colander. Larger and smaller, the earth is riddled with them. If the diggers of the holes happen to be just now within doors instead of gadding abroad like so many restless tourists, probably their conduct is not without a reason. Possibly they object to cold feet. More likely they have an eye to bodily safety. One thing you may wager upon, home-keepers though they be — the sharpness of their wits.

Whatever would live on this bare, open plain must be as wise as a serpent. The remainder of the text may be omitted as locally inapplicable. The desert-dweller — *Deserticola*, as we name

him in zoölogical Latin — must know the times and the seasons, and catch the scent of danger afar off. You will find no trustful innocence in these diggings. If there ever was any, it long ago perished. Everything is shy, and has need to be. "Nature red in tooth and claw" has here its ancestral seat. He that cannot fight must run; and however it may be elsewhere, in the desert the race is to the swift and the battle to the strong. In one way or another everything goes armed. It may be set with thorns like the mesquite and the cactus, or it may have an offensive oil like the creosote; it may run like the rabbit, or strike like the rattlesnake. If it can do nothing else, it must hide. And even the strong and the speedy must hide when that which is stronger and speedier heaves in sight. The desert is open to the sky, but its life is not open. Like the currents of the rivers, the current of animal existence runs mostly underground.

A Tucson business man was telling me about the great antiquity of the town: the oldest settlement in the country, I think he called it, with the exception of St. Augustine, Florida.

"But how in the world came a city to grow up here?" I inquired. "I can see no sufficient reason."

"Well," said he, as if he could think of no-

thing else, "the river comes to the surface here, you know."

He spoke of the Santa Cruz. And it is true. The river comes to the surface; the stretch of watered farms and the brimming irrigation ditches bear witness to the fact; but it does not stay there. I have frequent occasion to go over the four roads that cross it from the city. On the southernmost of these, where Mexican women are always to be seen washing clothes, spreading the garment over a stone and beating it clean with a stick ("mangling," I should suppose the word ought to be), carriages drive through the stream, while foot-passengers cross by means of stepping-stones; six or eight boulders of the size of a man's head, perhaps, picked up at random and laid in a row. The next road is furnished with a bridge, though it is hard to see why. The other two (they are all within the distance of a mile) have neither bridge nor stepping-stones, nor need of any. The river bottom, so called, though it is rather roof than bottom, is as dry as the Sahara.

So it is with the Rillito, and, I suppose, with all the rivers of the desert. They are shy creatures. They love not the garish day. Like the saints of old and the capitalists of our own time, they abhor publicity. Water, they think,

should n't be too much in sight. With the squirrel and the rabbit, they live mostly in burrows.

Of certain more highly specialized inhabitants of the desert — rattlesnakes, Gila monsters, tarantulas, and the like — a winter stroller can have little or nothing to relate. They are all here, no doubt, and will disport themselves in their season. No midsummer sun will be too hot for them. For myself, in three weeks' wandering I have seen one lizard, nothing else. And it, too, was shy, legging it for shelter; running, literally, "like a streak." That was really all that I saw — a streak of brown over the gray sand. I was neither a road-runner nor a hawk, and for that time the lizard was more scared than hurt.

If this shy life of the desert is happy, as I believe it is, after its manner and according to its measure, we can only admire once more the beneficent effect of use and custom. The safest of us are always in danger. Whether we tread the sands of the desert or the shaded paths of some Garden of Eden, our steps all tend to one end, the one event that happeneth alike to all; and if we, who look before and after, go on our way smiling, why not the humbler and presumably less sensitive people whose homes are under the roots of the creosote bushes?

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

A STUDENT of nature, differing from some less fortunate folk that one meets at wintering places, is never at a loss what to do with his day. In a strange land, at least (the stranger the better), he possesses one of the prime requisites of a contented life: he knows every night what is on his docket for the morrow. His days, so to express it, are all dovetailed together. Tuesday's work is to finish Monday's; Wednesday's is to finish Tuesday's; and so the weeks run by. What could be simpler, or more conducive to cheerfulness? A day should have a motive, as well as a piece of music or a poem.

I am still at Tucson. Two mornings ago there was but one thing for me to do. I knew it before I rose. I must take the half-past seven horse-car, ride down town as far as Simpson Street, walk thence across the Santa Cruz Valley to the base of Tucson Mountain, and from there follow the narrow road that winds between the foot of the cliffs and the old canal, till I came to a certain bush. The name of this bush I cannot give, not knowing it, but it bears millions of small, fleshy

leaves, and, what is more to the present purpose, is covered with thousands, if not millions, of small purple flowers.

I had noticed it for the first time the forenoon before; and I noticed it then because, as I passed, I heard to my great surprise and intense gratification the buzz of a hummingbird's wings. I was not in the least expecting to see any bird of that sort during my brief winter's stay in Arizona; and which is better, ornithologically speaking, to find the long expected or the unexpected, is a point that wiser heads than mine may settle. For myself, either happening will do, so it be not too infrequent.

My eyes turned of themselves in the right direction, and there at my elbow was the tiny, emerald-backed, familiar-looking beauty, hovering before the blossoms of this spreading bush. It was only for a second or two. Then for another such period he perched on the slender tip of the nearest mesquite, and then was away on the wings of the wind. I waited for his return, but not long enough, and came back to the city, wondering.

His upper parts, as I say, were green, and he looked at a first glance much like our common ruby-throat of the East. But in the few seconds that my eye followed him — a time too short for

catching myself up and making sure even of the little I had seen — I received an impression (it was nothing more) of a black head as well as of a black throat. If the impression was correct, the bird could not be a ruby-throat, and besides, unless my memory was at fault, the ruby-throat was not to be looked for in this longitude. I must see the handbook.

A reference to that authority showed that eight species of hummingbirds had been reported from the Catalina Mountains, but not the ruby-throat. Of the two or three common ones among the eight, the most likely candidate seemed to be the black-chinned, *Trochilus alexandri*, though that bird's crown is not black. Probably my impression upon that point had been erroneous; so surprised and hurried as I had been, a measure of inexactness was rather to be looked for. At all events, it was impossible to make out how the bird could be any one of the other seven. By the rule of exclusion — a pretty safe rule, I told myself — he ought to be a black-chin.

So the matter rested, not much to my satisfaction, till the next morning. Then, as I have already said, I went immediately after breakfast to stand beside that blossoming bush until the bird should again show himself. If my confidence that he would be there, in that precise spot, no

different from thousands of others in all those miles and miles of country, all so exactly alike, beside that particular bush, itself like thousands of others, — if my confidence seems presumptuous, as to many readers I dare say it will, I can only profess that it was based upon no small acquaintance with the ruby-throat's habit of frequenting day after day the same tree, and even the same twig, as a resting-place, or post of observation. It was not at all unlikely, I reasoned, that the black-chin's habit would prove to be similar. At any rate, there was no harm in proceeding upon that hypothesis.

I went at once to the place, therefore, took a favorable position with the sun at my back, focused my eight-power glass to a nicety upon the topmost twig of the mesquite bush (quarter seconds might be precious), and waited. As the capable reader has already divined, the bird did not fail me, nor keep me long in suspense. There was a sound of wings, and in another instant the hummer stood on the top spray of the mesquite. And his crown was black, like his throat. He could not be *alexandri*. But before I had time to take in the full awkwardness of my dilemma — since I had already ruled the other seven species out of the account — the bird turned his head to one side, the sun struck him at the right

angle, and behold, his gorget had long, flaring wings, like the loose ends of a broad necktie, or, to use the homely comparison which occurred to me at the moment, like a pair of big mutton-chop whiskers, and was no longer black, but of a most exquisite and brilliant shade of violet. The radiant vision shone upon me for an instant; then, at another movement of the head, all was black again, and in another instant the bird was gone.

Now, then, I began to see daylight. The bird, having a ruff, was not of the genus *Trochilus*, and the question was so far simplified, though it would be necessary to consult the book again before it could be settled. Meanwhile, I must by all means have another look at the beauty. Such splendor of color was worth waiting for, though it came only in flashes. And I waited. But though the creature finally returned to the mesquite he persisted in sitting with his back to the sun, and I came away without seeing him again transfigured.

Another reference to the handbook, and I knew him for *Calypte costæ*, the Costa hummingbird. But now mark how one day's work is linked with another's. The book informed me that the crown, as well as the gorget and the ruff, was "brilliantly burnished amethyst violet." I had not seen that, doubtless because the light had not

fallen upon the crown at the necessary angle. The detail must nevertheless be verified. Here, then, was my business for to-morrow.

I was late in arriving, — a full hour, at least, behind my appointment, — having walked the whole distance this time, and by a roundabout course; and the hummer was waiting for me. "You are late," I fancied him saying; but of course that was my "pathetic fallacy." In the course of my stay he "gave me three sittings," as my penciled memorandum puts it, and I saw that his forehead and a spot behind the ear were of the same dazzling, indescribably beautiful color as the gorget and ruff. The whole crown I did not see illuminated, but the forehead sufficed.

At one time a ruby-crowned kinglet came and played about in the same bush, and in that comparison he seemed almost a giant. "The hummer is smaller and smaller," my pencil remarked, "every time I see him." I might have addressed him as Charles Lamb addressed the shade of Elliston, when he saw that worthy, all his stage trappings removed, seated in Charon's boat, — "Bless me, how little you look."

The identification was now complete. I had doubled my list of hummingbirds, having seen but one species in all my previous years, and the next morning I might reasonably have turned

my steps elsewhere. But when the hour came round I could think of nothing else I wanted so much to do as to see that hummer again. And I followed my inclination. It was well I did.

We were both prompt. As I drew near I saw the tiny creature perched as usual at the tip of the mesquite. How many times he came and went during the hour that I stayed by him I fail to remember; but on the second or third occasion a verdin happened into the neighborhood. The hummer descended upon him hotly, drove him away in no time, and then, as if in celebration of his triumph, mounted straight into the air till he was like a dot, and came down again almost vertically to his perch. It was a brilliant and lovely display, an ebullition of vital spirits well worth a forenoon of any man's life to witness. There are city parades, hours in length, with martial music and all manner of bright regalia, that might better be skipped. And a few minutes later, the enemy having returned, the entire performance was repeated, ecstatic flight, vertical drop and all. The verdin's presence, it appeared, was extremely annoying to the hummer. This place was his. Trespassing was forbidden, and the verdin ought to know it.

Once, watching for another flash of color, I had my glass on the hummer as he sat quiet.

Suddenly the verdin began sputtering to himself, after his manner, a little way off. Quick as thought the hummer cocked his head, waited an instant as if to make sure he had heard correctly (it seemed impossible, I suppose, after such a drubbing), and then, like a bullet out of a gun, flew at the persistent intruder. His spirit was wonderful, and being roused to his work, he finished by descending at full speed upon a black phœbe that just then blundered innocently along. The big flycatcher, many times bigger than the hummer, — but so is a man many times bigger than a rifle ball, — did not stand upon the order of his going, but went at once. I did not wonder. The fellow might have driven me away, also, had he taken it into his head to try. He was irresistible. Talk of a strenuous life!

At another time he darted from his perch in a quite unwonted direction, and flew on the line to a palo-verde shrub off on the hillside. The verdin was there, it turned out, down at the very bottom of the bush, — though to my senses he had made no sign, — and must be dislodged forthwith.

Why the hummer offered no objection to the kinglet's presence is beyond my knowledge. Perhaps he took into account the fact that the kinglet was here only for the winter; for it was

impossible not to surmise that the hummer had selected this particular spot for his summer home, and as such meant to hold it against all comers, exercising over it all the rights of sovereignty. Let the verdin and the phœbe go elsewhere.

The phœbe pretty certainly would have gone elsewhere, hummer or no hummer. As to what the verdin will conclude to do, things being as they are, my mind is less clearly made up. He is not so swift as his bullet of a rival, but I fancy him to be a pretty dogged fighter, able to be whipped a good many times without finding it out. Still, as between the two, if I were compelled to wager, I think I should risk my money on the hummingbird.

THE DESERT REJOICES

WHAT was foretold in Judea is fulfilled in Arizona — the desert has blossomed like the rose.

I could hardly believe it, a month ago, when a Tucson business man, who in the kindness of his heart had turned the city upside down, almost, seeking to find a home for a man who was not a consumptive and did not wish to live in a hospital or a pest-house — I could hardly believe it, I repeat, when he said: "Oh, you must n't go back to Texas yet. You must stay and see the desert in bloom. After these unusual rains and snowfalls it will soon be all like a flower garden." "So may it turn out," I thought; "but time will tell."

He spoke, according to the privilege of prophets, in the language of hyperbole; for, although his prediction has come true, its fulfillment is more than a little straitened and stingy. The desert has blossomed, but it is like a flower garden only in this respect — that there are flowers in it. They are numbered by millions, indeed; or, rather, they are beyond all thought

of numeration; but, as far as the appearance of the place is concerned, it is scarcely more like a flower garden than like a billiard table. A careless traveler — and not so very careless, neither — might tread the blossoms under his feet for miles without seeing so much as one of them. They are desert flowers; vegetable Lilliputians; minute, almost microscopic, for the most part, as if moisture had been doled out to them by the drop or the thimbleful, as indeed it has been; and the few that are larger have in the main a weedy aspect, such as blinds the eye of the ordinary non-observer, to whom, rightly or wrongly, a flower is one thing and a weed another. As for the tiny ones, the overwhelming majority, a blossom that you can see in its place only by getting down on your knees to look for it may be a "flower" to a botanist, but hardly to a plain, unlettered, matter-of-fact citizen.

And still, after the prophetic manner, the prediction has come true. The desert has blossomed abundantly. As it now is, I can imagine that it would be a place of unspeakable interest to a philosophic botanist. He would know, presumably, what I do not, whether these starveling races, existers upon nothing, are to be accounted species by themselves, or only stunted representatives of species that under favoring conditions

grow to a more considerable size. To his mind numberless problems would be suggested touching the methods by which plants, sturdy and patient beings, adapt themselves to untoward circumstances and keep themselves alive — so perpetuating the race — upon the chariest of encouragement. He would understand the significance of the prevailing hairiness of desert-inhabiting species, as well as of the all but universal light bluish or dusty color of the foliage; for, saving the yellow-green creosote, there is hardly so much as a bright green leaf from one end of the desert to the other.

The state of my own unphilosophic mind is peculiar, like the circumstances in which it finds itself. It is (or perhaps it would be more honest to say, it ought to be) humiliating, but it has something of the charm of novelty.

I spoke a month ago of my ornithological predicament when, newly arrived in Texas, I found myself surrounded by a quite strange set of birds. I was back in the primer, I think I said. Well, botanically, here in Tucson, I have retrograded a long step farther even than that. If I may say so, my state is pre-primeric. I am not even a primary scholar. I am no scholar at all. My condition is what it was in childhood, when I had never heard of botany. In those days, in

what for some reason was known as a grammar school, we studied reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and grammar. One older girl, long since dead (poor child, I can see her now, reciting all by herself), studied "Watts on the Mind!" At the high school we added algebra, geometry, Latin, and Greek. As for "nature study," neither the name nor the thing was ever mentioned to us. Mr. Burroughs had not yet written, and if Thoreau had written, his books were not yet heard of. Botany and Hebrew were alike absent from our curriculum. For my own part, at any rate, whatever may have been true of my cleverer or more home-favored contemporaries, I neither knew the names of the flowers I saw, nor did I aspire to know them. If I ever thought of such knowledge, I regarded it as permanently beyond my ken. Who was I, that I should be wiser than all my betters? I contented myself with liking the things themselves.

Then, years afterward, I somehow began to "botanize," as we say, by myself; and from that time to the present, whether at home or abroad, I have always had a "manual" at my elbow or in my trunk. A strange flower must be looked up and set in its place.

But now, in Arizona, all this is done. I have

no manual. This carpet of desert plants I walk over almost without curiosity, as I might walk over a flowery carpet in a parlor. Their names are nothing more to me than the jabberings of the Mexicans who pass me on the desert with loads of wood. Sometimes, indeed, I guess at a relationship, as now and then I catch a word of Spanish. This flower, I say, may be a *Myosotis*. But nine chances to one I do not so much as guess. It 's a pretty red flower, or a dainty white blossom, and there 's an end of it. As I said just now, the state of my mind is pre-primeric. I am too ignorant even to ask questions.

A sad case, certainly, but, like sad cases in general, it brings its own partial compensations. I have the more leisure for the birds, and for looking at the mountains. Two months ago it would not have seemed possible, but it has come true; I can sit upon the ground with half a dozen kinds of unknown flowers about me, and gaze upon the Catalinas or the snow-capped Santa Ritas as peacefully or rapturously as if I had never used a manual or a pocket lens since I was born. Have I been converted, and become as a little child? Possibly; but I anticipate a speedy backsliding when conditions alter.

Yet I perceive that, like the prophet, I am waxing tropical, and using language that requires

"interpretation." There are at least three kinds of flowers in the desert that are not microscopic, and that I call by name. They are not very numerous; you may walk long distances without meeting them; but they are there. I mean the evening primrose, the lupine, and the California poppy. The primrose, which is much the commonest of the three, has no stalk, or none that is apparent; the large, handsome, lemon-colored flower opens directly from a tuft of leaves lying flat on the ground. As for the poppies, I should hardly speak of them as growing in the desert but for the fact that two or three days ago I stumbled upon a place (it would be like trying to find a spot in the ocean to look for it again) where the ground for the space of an acre or more was sparsely sprinkled with them. They were abnormally small, and very short in the stem; but they were bright as the sun, and being lighted upon thus unexpectedly they really made the spot a garden. As the prophet said, the place was "glad for them;" and so was I.

Both poppy and primrose (and the lupine as well) are much more at home on the foothills. There, too, are many flowers not to be seen at all on the desert. I cannot talk about them for lack of names. The brightest and showiest of them all is of a vivid, but, in my vocabulary, nameless

shade of red; not scarlet, nor crimson, nor orange, nor pink, but red. The plant stands a foot or so in height and bears a dozen, more or less, of rather large cup-shaped blossoms, the lively color of which would attract notice in any garden.

A very different favorite of mine (I have been intimate with it for a week) is a low — inch-high — composite flower, of the size of a ten-cent piece, with seven or eight white rays and a yellow disk; a dwarf daisy, it looks to be, with soft, cottony stem and leaves. It grows in the driest and most barren places, and as I sit down here and there on the hillsides to rest (looking meanwhile at the green barley fields and the ever-glorious mountains) I am sensibly happier if I see this dainty bit of nature's loveliness (a child, not a dwarf — I take back the word) within my hand's reach. It is the very flower to make a pet of; prettier by far than if it were taller and showier. Cultivation would spoil it. It was made for the desert.

And this reminds me to say that, if the hills are to be counted as part of the desert, as in reason they may be, then the prophet's word has been fulfilled, not partially but in all strictness. The desert has blossomed like the rose. For the slopes of the Tucson range are literally on fire

with blossoms. Patches of sun-bright yellow, some of them to all appearance an acre or more in extent, can be seen clear across the plain. I saw them yesterday afternoon as I started homeward from Camp Lowell. The distance could hardly be less than eight miles, and probably they would have been visible had it been twice as far. That the flowers are poppies, and not blossoms of a smaller cruciferous plant that is very abundant and gregarious hereabout, I am confident, not only because I am assured so by residents of the city, but because the patches are much less conspicuous in the early forenoon, when poppies are not wide open, than later in the day. Some of the patches (I can see a dozen from my window as I write, fully five miles off [1]) are well toward the tops of the mountains, which, needless to say, are not of great elevation, perhaps four thousand feet.

The poppy is the Tucson flower. Children go out upon the hills and bring back bunches to sell along the streets and from house to house. Their splendid color need not be praised. It is known to all Eastern people, who grow the plants in gardens (I seem to remember when they came in) under the name of *Eschscholtzia*. And here, on the mountain walls of this Arizona desert, are

[1] I visited more than one of them afterward.

hanging-gardens so full of them as to form masses of color visible ten or fifteen miles away! "They shall blossom abundantly," said the prophet; and who knows but he spoke of the Tucson Mountains in poppy time?

NESTS AND OTHER MATTERS

WITH the first of April approaching, the life of Arizona birds takes on a busier complexion. The idle season is over; now there are nests to be built (no small undertaking, in itself, as a man may easily find out by setting himself to build one), and a family to be watched over and defended. Now the human visitor begins to understand what cactuses were made for. As he walks among the whitish-green chollas, giving them elbow-room, he has only to glance to right and left to see what a considerable proportion of them are inhabited; this one by a pair of thrashers, the other by a pair of cactus wrens. In neither case is there any serious attempt at concealment; partly because the attempt would be useless; partly, we may guess, because concealment is unnecessary. If your safe is burglar proof, why be at the trouble to hide it? Neither squirrel nor snake is likely to climb a cholla cactus, and even a man knows enough to approach it with caution.

Of the two species of thrasher that live in the desert the larger one, known as Palmer's, seems

to be the earlier breeder. I found a nest with eggs on the first day of March; and on the ninth, I came upon a brood of young birds already out of the nest. They were still new to the world, acting as if they found it a strange, unintelligible place; but they were fully fledged, and when put to it, flew from one cholla to another without difficulty. Still, they had more faith in cactus thorns than in wing-power, and allowed me almost to lay hands on them before taking flight.

The two desert-inhabiting thrashers, by the by, Palmer's and Bendire's, are so much alike (the Palmer being somewhat longer and darker than its neighbor), that it was some time before I felt sure of myself in discriminating between them. As to the question of comparative length (one of the most uncertain points on which an observer can base a determination), I fell back upon an old method, which it seems worth while to mention here, because I have never seen it referred to in print. It has served one man well, and may do as much for another.

Two of our Eastern birds that are most troublesome to beginners in ornithology are the downy and the hairy woodpecker, the only difference between them — the only one that can ordinarily be seen in the field, I mean to say — being one of size. Well, I long ago discovered for myself

that it was much easier to carry in my eye the comparative measurements of the two birds' bills than the comparative measurements of the birds themselves. Let me see the head in profile, and I could name its owner almost beyond mistake.

This method, as I say, I resorted to in the case of my two desert thrashers, and little by little (time itself being of great service in such matters), I settled the question with myself. And still there remained a certain fact that cast a shade of doubt over my determination. In Mrs. Bailey's Handbook, the only authority I had brought with me, Mr. Herbert Brown, after twenty years' experience with Tucson birds, is quoted as saying that the Bendire thrasher almost never sings, whereas the birds that I was calling by that name were in song continually. What was I to think? It seemed a case for a gun. Without it, how could I ever be sure of my reckoning? I was in a box, as we say. But there was a way out. There almost always is. The two species lay eggs of different colors. I must find them; and with patience I did; first, the blue-green eggs of Palmer, and then (two sets in one day), the whitish eggs of Bendire; and my identification of the owners, made before the eggs were examined, turned out to be correct in all cases.

In the way of music, neither bird is equal to the brown thrasher of the East. In fact, if I am to be judge, one Massachusetts thrasher, in his cinnamon-colored suit (and in the top of a gray birch), could outsing any half-dozen of the birds in this Arizona desert. It is to be said, however, that there is a third species here (not on the face of the desert itself, but in the thickets along the Rillito River), the crissal thrasher so called, whose song I have yet to make sure of. He is larger even than the Palmer, and to look at him should have a fuller voice.

And this reminds me that I had been in Tucson more than a month before I saw a mocking-bird; and even now, when I have been here almost two months, I have seen but three. The people generally seem to mistake the thrashers for mockers. If I speak to them about the strangeness of the mocker's absence, they declare that mockers are common here. At least two persons have turned upon me with the assertion, "Why, there's one singing out there at this minute." And they point to a thrasher, a bird that wears not one of the mocker's three colors, — gray, black, and white, — and for music is as much like him as a child's tin whistle is like a master's flute. And still it is true, at least the systematists tell us so, and I have no thought of

questioning it, that the mockingbird is only a nobler kind of thrasher. And thrashers, the mocker included, are only larger kinds of wrens.

Arizona is the wrens' country. During my short stay in Tucson I have seen ten species: the sage thrasher, the Western mockingbird, the Bendire thrasher, the Palmer thrasher, the crissal thrasher, the cactus wren, the rock wren, the canyon wren, the Baird wren, and the interior tule wren.

The sage thrashers, whose mysterious silence was commented upon in a previous article, are only now beginning to find their voices; for they are still (March 21) in the desert, though they will go elsewhere to breed. Two days ago, while returning from the Rillito Valley, I came upon a group of them, and to my great pleasure two or three were in song; not letting themselves out, to be sure, but running over a medley of a tune under their breath in a kind of dumb rehearsal. I could barely hear it, but I saw at once why the birds, for all their short bills and unthrasher-like ways, are called sometimes sage thrashers and sometimes mountain mockingbirds. I hope their *sotto voce* preludings will not outlast my stay among them.

One of my particular favorites here is the Say phœbe. From the first he took my fancy. All

his ways please me. As the homely phrase is, I like the cut of his jib. His plaintive call is never wearisome, though he is exceedingly free with it. And I have grown to like him and his mate the better because they are fond of certain places where I myself am given to spending now and then an idle hour. There are four abandoned shanties in different parts of the desert, in the shade of which I often rest; and every one of them has its pair of Say phœbes. I saw the birds with building materials in their bills, and began by expecting to find the nest inside the open building; but by and by I discovered that they liked best of all a site down in a well! It seems a safe position to begin with — as long as the nest contains nothing but eggs; but I ask myself about the danger to the little ones when they become big enough to be uneasy. If they are anything like young robins, for example, a pitiful share of them must perish sixty feet underground. However, the birds may be presumed to understand their own business better than any outsider can teach it to them; and they unquestionably prefer the well. Of the four pairs just mentioned, three have built in that position (the wells, it should be understood, are not stoned), and the fourth would have done likewise, I dare say, only that the well in their

case happens to be covered. As it is, the nest is on one of the joists of a shed, and an impertinent stranger has been known to clamber up and examine the eggs. "Oh, if that well had only been left open!" the birds probably thought, as they saw what he was doing.

One kind of nest that is common here is set so out in sight that none but a blind man could miss it, though from its color it might readily be passed as an old one, not worth investigation. I do not remember just how many I have seen, — half a dozen, it may be, — but I have never looked into one. They cannot be looked into, unless they are first torn to pieces.

I speak of the verdin's nest. It is a marvel of workmanship: globular, or roughly so, with an entrance neatly roofed over well down on one side; constructed outwardly — I cannot speak beyond that, of course — of countless small thorny sticks, and in size and general color resembling a large paper-wasps' nest. The bird, as I say, plants it in full sight, in a leafless cat's-claw bush, by preference, though I have seen one beauty in a palo-verde tree.

My first one I was directed to by the outcries of the owner. The foolish thing — if she *was* foolish — actually went inside, and while there scolded me. She took it for granted, I suppose,

that I had seen her go in, and was determined to let me know what she thought of such despicable espionage. As a matter of fact, I was busy just then with a rarer bird, and might have passed her pretty house unnoticed had she held her peace. But the verdin is a nervously loquacious body, and perhaps would rather talk than keep a secret. Such cases have been heard of. Whatever else we may say of her, she is an architect of something like genius.

A FLYCATCHER AND A SPARROW

I BELIEVE I have seen two of the oddest birds in Texas — the road-runner and the scissor-tailed flycatcher. The first was mentioned some time ago in these letters; the second I have but lately met with. When I was in San Antonio in January, he was absent for the winter. He would return, I was informed, shortly after the middle of March, and I have kept it fast in mind that I must stop here on my way home and make his acquaintance.

I knew he was odd, but he has turned out to be odder even than I supposed. Other places, other birds, as a matter of course, but surely this one, to use Emerson's word, is the "otherest." When I saw him first, in San Pedro Park (everything is saintly in the Southwest), I thought for an instant that I was looking at a bird which had seized a long string, or a strip of cloth, and was flying away with it to his nest. Seen more fully, he looked, I said to myself, like a Japanese kite, or some other outlandish plaything. Even now, when he has been in sight pretty constantly for five or six days, I can hardly say that he

looks like a bird to me. His enormously long tail feathers are so fantastic, so almost grotesque! They render him a kind of monstrosity. One feels as if he had been made, not born; and some Oriental must have been the maker.

Yet if ever a bird was alive, he is. His spirits are effervescent and apparently inexhaustible. Few birds are noisier or more continually on the move. When six or eight scissor-tails meet for consultation in one small tree, even though it be in a cemetery, there are "great doings," as the country phrase is. What the disturbance is all about, it is beyond me to tell, but it seems a reasonable assumption that it has to do somehow with questions of love and marriage. So far as I have noticed, such sessions do not last long. In the nature of things they cannot. The hubbub increases, the discussion, whatever its subject, waxes more and more animated, and then, of a sudden, the assembly breaks up (I was going to say explodes), and away fly the birds (and the birds' tails), every one still contending for the last word.

But there is no need of six or eight to set the pot bubbling. Two are a plenty; and indeed I suspect that a single bird would have it out with himself rather than forego for an hour or two the excitement of a shindy. In temperament the

scissor-tail, as well as I can determine, is own brother to the kingbird. As I said, he is brimming over with spirits. If he gave them no vent he would burst.

So after a few minutes of quietness, the calm that precedes the storm, he darts into the air, with vehement, mad gyrations, opening and shutting his tail feathers spasmodically, and uttering loud cries of one sort and another. Perhaps he flies straight upward, or as nearly so as possible (this is one of the kingbird's tricks), and with tail outspread comes down headfirst like an arrow. He is like a creature full of wine, or like one beside himself. What he does, he has to do. There is no holding him in.

Sometimes, when there are two in the air together, and for anything I know at other times, — I tell what I have seen, — they utter most curious, hollow, throbbing, booming noises, such as one would never attribute to any bird of the flycatcher family. They utter them, I say, but I mean only that they make them. How they do it, whether with the throat, the wings, or the tail, is something I have yet to discover. The only book I have at hand makes no mention of such noises, and I was greatly taken aback when I heard them.

As the reader perceives, I am dealing in first

impressions. They are all I have. Most of the scissor-tail's tricks and manners, indeed, I have yet to witness. I have not seen him chase a crow, for instance, or a raven (he would have to travel a hundred miles, I suspect, to find either the one or the other), but give him half a chance, and I am sure he would do it. One thing I have seen him do: I have seen him fly before an English sparrow. The action seemed unworthy of him, but I dare say he did not so regard it. Perhaps it was all a joke. But apparently no bird considers it a disgrace to be put to rout by a smaller one. The shameful thing is to be afraid of one that is larger than yourself. This is not the human way of looking at such matters; but perhaps that does not prove it a false way. I seem to see that much might be said in defense of it.

It is surprising how common the scissor-tail is, and more surprising yet that nobody seems to notice him. I should have thought that all the passers-by would be stopping to stare at so half-absurd a prodigy. But when he performs his craziest evolutions here in the Alamo Plaza, in the very heart of the city, nobody appears to mind him. The truth is that to these people — to most of them, at least — he is an old story, while to me he is like a bird invented last week. Wher-

ever you notice men, you will perceive that it is not the wonderful that attracts their attention, but the novel and the out-of-the-way. The moon and the stars they are used to, and quite properly look upon with indifference; but let a neighbor's hencoop catch fire, and they cannot run fast enough to behold the spectacle.

Another and better thing I have accomplished during my present brief stay in San Antonio: I have heard and seen the Cassin sparrow. A Washington ornithologist, familiar with this Southwestern country, learning that I was on my way thither, wrote to me in January: "On no account return without hearing the Cassin sparrow." To confess the truth, I had almost forgotten the injunction, emphatic as it was; but a few mornings ago, on my way back to the terminus of the street-car line after a jaunt into some old pecan woods, five or six miles out of the city, I stopped short at the sound of a few simple bird notes. What a gracious tune! And as novel as it was gracious! I had never heard the like: a long trill or shake, pitched at the top of the scale, and then, after a rest, a phrase of five notes in the sweetest of sparrow voices, ending with the truest and most unexpected of musical intervals. For mnemonic purposes, as my custom is (useful to me, if to no one else), I at once put

words to the tune: "She" (this for the long trill), "pretty, pretty she."

The birds were in some scattered mesquite bushes (very bright now, in their new yellow-green leafage), and I hastened to get through the fence and make up to them. They proved to be very small, and distressingly deficient in marks or "characters," but I took such note of them as I could, in a poor light. The main thing, for the time being, was the song. That prolonged opening note, with its sound of an indrawn whistle, ought to be the work of a *Pucæa*, I told myself, remembering the Florida representative of that genus, and the singers should therefore be Cassin sparrows.

The next morning, having refreshed my memory by a reading of the handbook, I took the car immediately after breakfast for another visit to the place. This, I should have said, was in the rear grounds of an asylum for the insane. It was Sunday morning, and as I crawled through the fence and took up my position among the mesquites, I presently found myself under fire from the windows and balconies. The distance was too great for me to understand what was said, but there was no doubt that the inmates of the institution regarded me as a queer one. However, I believed in my own sanity (as things go in this

world), and did not propose to be hindered. The birds were there, and that was enough.

And now, to my intense satisfaction, I found that they were doing just what the handbook described: springing into the air for a few feet, after the manner of long-billed marsh wrens, and with fluttering wings dropping slowly back to the perch, uttering their sweet, "She, pretty, pretty she," as they descended. I secured somewhat fuller observations of their plumage, also, and became morally certain — which means something less than scientifically certain, though really, taking Mr. Attwater's list of the birds of San Antonio as a guide, there is nothing else they can be — that the singers were Cassin sparrows.[1]

And glad I am to have heard them. I cannot speak for others; judgment in such matters must always be largely a question of personal taste; but for myself I have heard few bird songs that satisfy me so well; so quaint and original, yet so true and simple. San Antonio mockingbirds are numberless, and their performances are wonderful; I think I should never tire of them; but somehow those six quiet notes of the sparrow seem to go deeper home.

[1] And so they were, on the testimony of the Washington ornithologist above quoted, who knows both bird and song.

A BUNCH OF BRIGHT BIRDS

ALMOST or quite the most brilliant bird that I saw in Arizona was the vermilion flycatcher. I had heard of it as sometimes appearing in the neighborhood of Tucson, but entertained small hope of meeting it there myself. A stranger, straitened for time, and that time in winter, blundering about by himself, with no pilot to show him the likely places, could hardly expect to find many besides the commoner things. So I reasoned with myself, aiming to be philosophical. Nevertheless, there is always the chance of green hand's luck; I knew it by more than one happy experience; and who could tell what might happen? Possibly it was not for nothing that my eye, as by a kind of magnetic attraction, fell so often upon Mrs. Bailey's opening sentence about this particular bird as day after day, on one hunt and another, I turned the leaves of her Handbook. "Of all the rare Mexican birds seen in southern Arizona and Texas," so I read, "the vermilion flycatcher is the gem."

One thing was certain: this famous Mexican rarity was not confusingly like anything else,

as so many of its Northern relatives have the unhandsome trick of being. If I saw it, ever so hurriedly, I should recognize it.

Well, I did see it, and almost of course at a moment when I was least looking for it. This was on the 5th of February, my fifth day in Tucson. I had crossed the Santa Cruz Valley, west of the city, by one road, and after a stroll among the foothills opposite, was returning by another, when a bit of flashing red started up from the wire fence directly before me. I knew what it was, almost before I saw it, as it seemed, so eager was I, and so well prepared; and as the solitary's companionable habit is, I spoke aloud. "There 's the vermilion flycatcher!" I heard myself saying.

The fellow was every whit as splendid as my fancy had painted him, and to my joy he seemed to be not in the least put out by my approach nor chary of displaying himself. He was too innocent and too busy; darting into the air to snatch a passing insect, and anon returning to his perch, which was now a fence-post, now the wire, and now, best of all, the topmost, tilting spray of a dwarf mesquite. Thus engaged, every motion a delight to the eye, he flitted along the road in advance of me, till finally, having reached the limit of his hunting-ground, — the roadside

ditches filled with water from the overflow of irrigated barley fields, — he turned back by the way he had come.

I went home a happy man; I had added one of the choicest and most beautiful of American birds to my mental collection. One thing was still lacking, however: flycatchers are not song-birds, but the humblest of them has a voice, and having things to say is apt to say them; my new acquaintance had kept his thoughts to himself.

This was in the forenoon, and after luncheon I went back to walk again over that muddy road between those ditches of muddy water. The bird might still be there. And he was, — still catching insects, and still silent. But so handsome! At first sight most people, I suppose, would compare him, as I did, with the scarlet tanager. The red parts are of nearly or quite the same shade, — a little deeper and richer, if anything, — while the wings, tail, and back are dark brown, approaching black, — the wings and tail especially, — dark enough, at any rate, to afford a brilliant contrast. His scientific name is Pyrocephalus, which is admirable as far as it goes, but falls a long way short of telling the whole truth about him; for not only is his head of a fiery hue, but his whole body as well, with the

exceptions already noted. In size he ranks between the least flycatcher and the wood pewee. In liveliness of action he is equal to the spryest of his family, with a flirt of the tail which to my eye is identical with that of the phœbe. His gorgeous color is the more effective because of his aerial habits. The tanager is bright sitting on the bough, but how much brighter he would look if every few minutes he were seen hovering in mid-air with the sunlight playing upon him!

Certainly I was in great luck, and I felt it the more as day after day I found the dashing beauty in the same place. I could not spend my whole winter vacation in visiting him, but I saw him there at odd times, — nearly as often as I passed, — until February 17. Then he disappeared; but a week later I discovered him, or another like him, in a different part of the valley, and on the 26th I saw two. The next day, for the first time, one of the birds was in voice, uttering a few fine, short notes, little remarkable in themselves, but thoroughly characteristic; not suggestive of any other flycatcher notes known to me; so that, from that time to the end of my stay in Tucson, I was never in doubt as to their authorship, no matter where I heard them.

All these earlier birds were males in full plumage. The first female — herself a beauty,

with a modest tinge of red upon her lower parts, enough to mark the relationship — was noticed March 5. Males were now becoming common, and on the 9th, although my walks covered no very wide territory, I counted, of males and females together, seventeen. From first to last not one was met with on the creosote and cactus-covered desert, but after the first few days of March they were well distributed over the Santa Cruz and Rillito valleys and about the grounds of the university. I found no nest until March 27, although at least two weeks earlier than that a female was seen pulling shreds of dry bark from a cottonwood limb, while her mate flitted about the neighborhood, now here, now there, as if he were too happy to contain himself.

The prettiest performance of the male, witnessed almost daily, and sometimes many times a day, after the arrival of the other sex, was a surprisingly protracted ecstatic flight, half flying, half hovering, the wings being held unnaturally high above the back, as if on purpose to display the red body (a most peculiar action, by which the bird could be told as far as he could be seen), accompanied throughout by a rapid repetition of his simple call; all thoroughly in the flycatcher manner; exactly such a mad, lyrical outburst as one frequently sees indulged in by the chebec, for

instance, and the different species of phœbe. In endurance, as well as in passion, Pyrocephalus is not behind the best of them, while his exceptional bravery of color gives him at such moments a glory altogether his own. Sometimes, indeed, he seems to be emulous of the skylark himself, he rises to such a height, beating his way upward, hovering for breath, and then pushing higher and still higher. Once I saw him and the large Arizona crested flycatcher in the air side by side, one as crazy as the other; but the big *magister* was an awkward hand at the business, compared with the tiny Pyrocephalus.

It was good to find so showy a bird so little disposed to shyness. At Old Camp Lowell, where I often rested for an hour at noon in the shade of one of the adobe buildings, the bachelor winter occupants of which were kind enough to give me food and shelter (together with pleasant company) whenever my walk took me so far from home, our siesta was constantly enlivened by his bright presence and engaging tricks. One day, as he perched at the top of a low mesquite, on a level with our eyes, I put my glass into the hand of the younger of my hosts. He broke out in a tone of wonder. "Well, now," said he (he spoke to the bird), "you are a peach." And so he is. It is exactly what, in my more old-fashioned and

less collegiate English, I have been vainly endeavoring to say.

And to be a "peach" is a fine thing. A vivacious living essayist, it is true, who is probably a handsome man himself, at least in the looking-glass, declares that "male ugliness is an endearing quality." The remark may be true — in a sense; by all means let us hope so, seeing how lavish Nature has been with the commodity in question; but I am confident that the female vermilion flycatcher would never admit it. As for her glorious dandy of a husband, there can be no doubt what opinion he would hold of such an impudent reflection upon feminine perspicacity and taste. "A plague upon paradoxes and aphorisms," I hear him answer. "If fine feathers don't make fine birds, what in Heaven's name do they make?"

It was only two days after my discovery of the vermilion flycatcher (if I remember correctly I was at that moment on my way to enjoy a third or fourth look at him) that I first saw a very different but scarcely less interesting novelty. I was on the sidewalk of Main Street, in the busy part of the day, my thoughts running upon a batch of delayed letters just received, when suddenly I looked up (probably I had heard a voice without being conscious of it, for the confirmed

hobby-rider is sometimes in the saddle unwittingly) and caught sight of a few swifts far overhead. People were passing, but it was now or never with me, and I whipped out my opera-glass. There were six of the birds, and their throats were white. So much I saw, having known what to look for, and then they were gone, — as if the heavens had opened and swallowed them up. It was a niggardly interview, at pretty long range, but a deal better than nothing; enough, at all events, for an identification. They were white-throated swifts, — *Aëronautes melanoleucus*.

Three days later a flock of at least seventeen birds of the same species were hawking over the Santa Cruz Valley, and now, as they swept this way and that at their feeding, there was leisure for the field-glass and something like a real examination. To my surprise (surprise is the compensation of ignorance) I discovered that they had not only white throats, as their name implies, but white breasts, and more noticeable still, white rumps. Those who are familiar with our common dingy, soot-colored chimney swift of the East will be able to form some idea of the distinguished appearance of this Westerner: a considerably larger bird, built on the same rakish lines, shooting about the sky in the same lightning-like zigzags, and marked in this striking and original

manner with white. I saw the birds only four times afterward, the last time on the 17th of February. So I say, speaking after the manner of men; but in truth I can see them now, their white rumps lighting up as they wheel and catch the sun. It pleases me to learn that it is next to impossible to shoot them, and that they are scarce in collections. So may they continue. They were made for better things.

The most *beautiful* bird that I found in Arizona, though judgments of this kind are of necessity liable to revision as one's mood changes, was the Arizona Pyrrhuloxia. I should be glad to give the reader, as well as to have for my own use, an English name for it, but so far as I am aware it has none. It has lived beyond the range of the vernacular. My delight in its beauty was less keen than naturally it would have been, because I had spent my first raptures upon its equally handsome Texas relative of the same name a few weeks before. This was at San Antonio, in the chaparral just outside the city. I had been listening to a flock of lark sparrows, I remember, and looking at sundry things, where almost everything was new, when all at once I saw before me at the foot of a bush the loveliest bunch of feathers that I had ever set eyes on. Without the least thought of what I was doing

I began repeating to myself under my breath, "O my soul! O my soul!" And in sober truth the creature was deserving of all the admiration it excited: a bird of the cardinal's size and build, dressed not in gaudy red, but in the most exquisite shade of gray, with a plentiful spilling of an equally exquisite rose color over its under parts. Its bright orange bill was surrounded at the base by a double ring of black and rose, and on its head was a most distinguished-looking, divided crest, tipped with rose color of a deeper shade. It was loveliness to wonder at. I cannot profess that I was awe-struck (not being sure that I know just what that excellent word means), but it would hardly be too much to say that "as I passed, I worshiped."

The Arizona bird, unhappily, was not often seen (the Texas bird treated me better), though when I did come upon it, it was generally in accessible places (in wayside hedgerows) not far from houses. It would be impossible to see either the Texas or the Arizona bird for the first time without comparing it with the cardinal, the two are so much alike, and yet so different. The cardinal is brighter, but for beauty give me Pyrrhuloxia. I do not expect the sight of any other bird ever to fill me with quite so rapturous a delight in pure color as that first unlooked-for

Pyrrhuloxia did in the San Antonio chaparral. It was like the joy that comes from falling suddenly upon a stanza of magical verse, or catching from some unexpected quarter a strain of heavenly music.

If Pyrocephalus was the brightest and Pyrrhuloxia the most beautiful of my Arizona birds, Phainopepla must be called the most elegant, the most supremely graceful, if I may be pardoned such an application of the word, the most incomparably genteel. I saw it first at Old Camp Lowell, before mentioned, near the Rillito, at the base of the low foothills of the Santa Catalina Mountains. At my first visit to the camp, which is six or seven miles from the city of Tucson, straight across the desert, I mistook my way at the last and approached the place from the farther end by a cross-cut through the creosote bushes. Just as I reached the adobe ruins, all that is left of the old camp, I descried a black bird balancing itself daintily at the tip of a mesquite. I lifted my glass, caught sight of the bird's crest, and knew it for a Phainopepla. How good it is to find something you have greatly desired and little expected!

The Phainopepla (like the Pyrrhuloxia it has no vernacular appellation, living only in that sparsely settled, Spanish-speaking corner of the

world) is ranked with the waxwings, though except for its crest there is little or nothing in its outward appearance to suggest such a relationship; and the crest itself bears but a moderate resemblance to the pointed topknot of our familiar cedar-bird. What I call the Phainopepla's elegance comes partly from its form, which is the very perfection of shapeliness, having in the highest degree that elusive quality which in semi-slang phrase is designated as "style;" partly from its motions, all prettily conscious and in a pleasing sense affected, like the movements of a dancing-master; and partly from its color, which is black with the most exquisite bluish sheen, set off in the finest manner by broad wing-patches of white. These wing-patches are noticeable, furthermore, for being divided into a kind of network by black lines. It is for this reason, I suppose, that they have a peculiar gauzy look (I speak of their appearance while in action) such as I have never seen in the case of any other bird, and which often made me think of the ribbed, translucent wings of certain dragon flies.

Doubtless this peculiar appearance was heightened to my eyes, because of the mincing, wavering, over-buoyant method of flight (the wings being carried unusually high) to which I have alluded, and which always suggested to me the

studied movements of a dance. I think I never saw one of the birds so far forget itself as to take a direct, straightforward course from one point to another. No matter where they might be going, though the flight were only a matter of a hundred yards, they progressed always in pretty zigzags, making so many little, unexpected, indecisive tacks and turns by the way, butterfly fashion, that you began to wonder where they would finally come to rest.

The two birds first seen — the female in lovely gray — were evidently at home about the camp. The berry-bearing parasitic plants in the mesquites seemed to furnish them with food, and no doubt they were settled there for the season; and at least two more were wintering out among the Chinese kitchen gardens, not far away. And some weeks afterward I came upon a third pair, also in a mesquite grove, on the Santa Cruz side of the desert. But though in the two river valleys I passed a good many hours in their society, I never once heard them sing, nor, so far as I can now recall, did they ever utter any sound save a mellow *pip*, almost exactly like a certain call of the robin; so like it, in fact, that to the very last I never heard it suddenly given, but my first thought was of that common Eastern bird, whose voice in those early spring days it

would have been so natural and so pleasant to hear. I could have spared a dozen or two of thrashers, I thought (not *brown* thrashers), for a pair of robins and a pair of bluebirds. But southern Arizona is a kind of thrasher paradise, while robins and bluebirds desire a better country, and seemingly know where to find it.[1]

In the last week of March, however, there took place, as well as I could judge, a concerted movement of Phainopeplas northward. They showed themselves in the Santa Cruz Valley, here and there a pair, until they became, not abundant, indeed, but a counted-upon, every-day sight. Those that I had heretofore seen, it appeared, were only a few winter "stay-overs." Now the season had opened; and now the birds began singing. For curiosity's sake it pleased me to hear them, but the brief measure, in a thin, squeaky voice, was nothing for any bird to be proud of. They sing best to the eye. "Birds of the shining robes," their Greek name calls them; and worthily do they wear it, under that unclouded Arizona sun, perching, as they habitually do, at the tip of some tree or bush, where the

[1] It should be said, nevertheless, that straggling flocks of Western bluebirds — lovely creatures — were met with on the desert on rare occasions, and once, at Old Camp Lowell, three robins — Westerners, no doubt — passed over my head, flying toward the mountains, in which they are said to winter.

man with birds in his eye can hardly fail to sight them and name them, across the widest barley field.

One of the birds whose acquaintance I chiefly wished to make on this my first Western journey was the famous canyon wren, — famous not for its beauty (beauty is not the wren family's mark), but for its voice. Whether my wish would be gratified was of course a question, especially as my very modest itinerary included no exploration of canyons; but I was not without hope.

I had been in Tucson nearly a week, when one cool morning after a cold night (it was February 7) I went down into the Santa Cruz Valley and took the road that winds — where there is barely room for it — between the base of Tucson Mountain and the river. Steep, broken cliffs, perhaps a hundred feet high, were on my right hand, and the deep bed of the shallow river lay below me on my left. Here I was enjoying the sun, and keeping my eyes open, when a set of loud, clear bird notes in a descending scale fell upon my ears from overhead. I stopped, pulled myself together, and said, "A canyon wren." I remembered a description of that descending scale. The next instant a small hawk took wing from the spot on the cliff whence the notes had

seemed to fall. My mind wavered, but only for a moment. "No, no," I said, "it is not in any hawk's throat to produce sounds of that quality;" and I waited. A rock wren began calling, but rock wrens did not count with me at that moment. Then, in a very different voice, a wren, presumably the one I was in search of, began fretting, unseen, somewhere above my head; and then, silence. I waited and waited. Finally I tried an old trick — I started on. If the bird was watching me, as likely enough he was, a movement to leave his neighborhood would perhaps excite him pleasurably. And so it did; or so it seemed; for almost at once the song was given out and repeated: a hurried introductory phrase, and then the fuller, longer, more liquid notes, tripping in procession down the scale.

The singer could be no other than the canyon wren; but of course I must see him. At last, my patience outwearing his, he fell to scolding again, and glancing up in the direction of the sound, I saw him on the jutting top of the very highest stone, his white throat and breast flashing in the sun, and the dark, rich brown of his lower parts setting the whiteness off to marvelous advantage. There he stood, calling and bobbing, calling and bobbing, after the familiar wren manner, though why he should resent an inno-

cent man's presence so far below was more than any innocent man could imagine.

It would be an offense against the truth not to confess that the celebrated song fell at first a little short of my expectations. Perhaps I had heard it celebrated somewhat too loudly and too often. It was very pleasing; the voice beautifully clear and full, and the cadence of the sweetest; it had the grace of simplicity; indeed, there was nothing to be said against it, except that I had supposed it would be — well, I hardly know what, but somehow wilder and more telling.

Within a few days I discovered a second pair of the birds not far away, about an old, long-disused adobe mill. They were already building a nest somewhere inside, entering by a crack over one of the windows. The female appeared to be doing the greater part of the work, while her mate sat upon the edge of the flat roof and sang for her encouragement, or railed at me for my too assiduous lounging about the premises. The more I listened to the song, the better I enjoyed it; it is certainly a song by itself; I have never heard anything with which to compare it; and I was especially pleased to see how many variations the performer was able to introduce into his music, and yet leave it always the same.

The first pair, on the precipitous face of the

mountain, had chosen the more romantic site, and I often stopped to admire their address in climbing about over the almost perpendicular surface of the rock; now disappearing for a few seconds, now popping into sight again a little further on; finding a foothold everywhere, no matter how smooth and steep the rock might look.

The canyon wren is a darling bird and a musical genius; and now that I have ceased to measure his song by my extravagant expectations concerning it, I do not wish it in any wise altered. His natural home is by the side of falling water (I have heard him since, where I should have heard him first, in a canyon), and his notes fall with it. I seem to hear them dropping one by one, every note by itself, as I write about them. If they are not of a kind to be ecstatic over at a first hearing (a little too simple for that), they are all the surer of a long welcome. Indeed, I am half ashamed to have so much as referred to my own early lack of appreciation of their excellence. Perhaps this was one of the times when the truth should not have been spoken.

My mention just now of the wren's cleverness in traveling over the steep side of Tucson Mountain called to mind a similar performance on the part of a very different bird — a road-runner — in the same place; and though it was not in my

plan to name that bird in this paper, I cannot deny myself the digression.

I had taken a friend, newly inoculated with ornithological fever, down to this mountain-side road to show him a black-chinned humming-bird. We had seen it, to his amazement, on the very mesquite where I had told him it would be ("Well!" he said, — and a most eloquent "well" it was, — when I pointed the bird out, scarcely more than a speck, as we came in sight of the bush), and were driving further, when I laid my hand on the reins and bade him look up. There, halfway up the precipitous, broken cliff, was the big, mottled, long-tailed bird, looking strangely out of place to both of us, who had never seen him before except in the lowlands, running along the road, or dodging among clumps of bushes. Then of a sudden, he began climbing, and almost in no time was on the very topmost stone, at the base of a stunted palo-verde. There he fell to cooing (like a dove, I said, forgetting at the moment that the road-runner is a kind of cuckoo), and by the time he had repeated the phrase three or four times we remarked that before doing so he invariably lowered his head. We sat and watched and listened ("There!" one or the other would say, as the head was ducked) for I know not how many minutes, commenting

upon the droll appearance of the bird, perched thus above the world, and cooing in this (for him) ridiculous, lovelorn, gesticulatory manner.

Then, as we drove on, I recalled the strangely rapid and effortless gait with which he had gone up the mountain. "He did n't use his wings, did he?" I asked; and my companion thought not. I was reminded of a bird of the same kind that I had seen a few days before cross a deep gully perhaps twenty feet in width. "He seemed to slide across," said the man who was with me. That was exactly the word. He did not lift a wing, to the best of our noticing, nor rise so much as an inch into the air, but as it were stepped from one bank to the other. So this second bird went up the mountain-side almost without our seeing how he did it. A few steps, and he was there, as by the exercise of some special gift of specific levity. He did not fly; and yet it might have "*seemed* he flew, the way so easy was." Take him how you will, the road-runner's looks do not belie him: he is an odd one; and never odder, I should guess, than when he stands upon a mountain-top and with lowered head pours out his amorous soul in coos as gentle as a sucking dove's. I count myself happy to have witnessed the moving spectacle.

I am running into superlatives, but no matter.

Jan 19-1916
C.9

The feeling against their use is largely prejudice. Let me suit myself with one or two more, therefore, and say that the rarest and most exciting bird seen by me in Arizona was a painted redstart, *Setophaga picta*. It was at the base of Tucson Mountain, close by the canyon wrens' old mill. The vermilion flycatcher, rare as I considered it at first, became after a while almost excessively common. I believe it is no exaggeration to say that forty or fifty pairs must have been living in and about Tucson before the first of April. Unless you were out upon the desert, you could hardly turn round without seeing or hearing them. But there was no danger of the painted redstart's cheapening itself after this fashion. I saw it twice, for perhaps ten minutes in all, and as long as I live I shall be thankful for the sight.

I was playing the spy upon a pair of what I took to be Arkansas goldfinches, and the question being a nice one, had got over a wire fence to have the sun at my back. There I had barely focused my eight-power glass upon a leafless willow beside an irrigation ditch, when all at once there moved into its field such a piece of absolute gorgeousness as I have no hope of making my reader see by means of any description: a small bird in three colors, — deep, velvety black, the

snowiest white, and the most brilliant red. Its glory lay in the depth and purity of the three colors; its singularity lay in a point not mentioned in book descriptions, being inconspicuous, I suppose, in cabinet specimens: a line (almost literally a line) of white below the eye. From its position and its extreme tenuity I took it for the lower eyelid, but as to that I cannot speak with positiveness. It would hardly have showed, even in life, I dare say, but for its intensely black surroundings. As it was, it fairly stared at me. I cannot affirm that it added to the bird's beauty. Apart from it the colors were all what I may call solid, — laid on in broad masses, that is: a red belly, a long white band (not a bar) on each wing, some white tail feathers, white lower tail coverts, and everything else black. It does not sound like anything so very extraordinary, I confess. But the reader should have *seen* it. Unless he is a very dry stick indeed, he would have let off an exclamation or two, I can warrant. There are cases in which the whole is a good deal more than the sum of all its parts.

The bird was on one of the larger branches, over which it moved in something of the black-and-white creeper's manner, turning its head to one side and the other alternately as it progressed. Then it sat still a long time (a long time for a

warbler), so near me that the glass brought it almost into my hand, while I devoured its beauty; and then, of a sudden, it took flight into the dense, leafy top of a tall cottonwood, and I saw it no more. No more for that time, that is to say. In my mind, indeed, I bade it good-by forever. It was not to be thought of that such a bit of splendor (I had read of it as a mountain bird) should happen in my way more than once. But eight days afterward (March 28), in nearly the same place, it appeared again, straight over my head; and I was almost as much astonished as before. It was exploring the bare branches of a row of roadside ash trees, and I followed it, or rather preceded it, backing away as it flitted from one tree to the next, keeping the sun behind me. It carried itself now much like the common redstart; a little more inclined to moments of inactivity, perhaps, but at short intervals darting into the air after a passing insect with all conceivable quickness.

And such colors! Such an unspeakable red, so intense a black, and so pure a white! If I said that the vermilion flycatcher was the brightest bird I saw in Arizona, I was like the Hebrew psalmist. I said it in my haste.

This time the redstart was in a singing mood. On the previous occasion it had kept silence, and

I had thought I was glad to have it so, feeling that no voice could be good enough to go with such feathers. In its way the feeling was justified; but, after all, it would have been too bad to miss the song. Curiosity has its claims, no less than sentiment. And happily the song proved to be a very pretty one; similar to that of the Eastern bird, to be sure, but less hurried (so it seemed to me), less over-emphatic, and in a voice less sharp and thin; a very pretty song (for a warbler), though, as is true of the Phainopepla and most other brilliantly handsome birds (and all good children), the redstart's proper appeal is to the eye. So far as human appreciation is concerned, it need make no other.

I have heard a canyon wren in a canyon, I said. It was a glorious day in a glorious place, — Sabino Canyon, it is called, in the Santa Catalina Mountains. And it was there, where the ground was all a flower garden, and the dashing brook a doubly delightful sight and sound after so much wandering over the desert and so many crossings of dry, sandy river-beds, — it was there, amid a cluster of leafy oaks (strange oak leaves they were) and leafless hackberry trees, that I saw my first and only solitaire, — *Myadestes townsendii*. I have praised other birds for their brightness and song; this one I must praise

for a certain nameless dignity and, as the present-day word is, distinction. He did not deign to break silence, or to notice in any manner, unless it were by an added touch of patrician reserve, the presence of three human intruders. I stared at him, — exercising a cat's privilege, — for all his hauteur, admiring his gray colors, his conspicuous white eye-ring, and his manner. I say "manner," not "manners." You would never liken *him* to a dancing-master.

He was the solitaire, I somehow felt certain (certain with a lingering of uncertainty), though I had forgotten all description of that bird's appearance. It was the place for him, and his looks went with the name. Moreover, to confess a more prosaic consideration, there was nothing else he could be.

"Myadestes," I said to my two companions, both unacquainted with such matters; "I think it is Myadestes, though I can't exactly tell why I think so."

We must go into the canyon a little way, gazing up at the walls, picking a few of the more beautiful flowers, feeling the place itself (the best thing one *can* do, whether in a canyon or on a mountain-top); then we came back to the hackberry trees, but the solitaire was no longer in them. I had had my opportunity, and perhaps

had made too little of it. It is altogether likely that I shall never see another bird of his kind.

For now those cloudless Arizona days, the creosote-covered desert, and the mountain ranges standing round about it, are all for me as things past and done; a bright memory, and no more. One event conspired with another to put a sudden end to my visit (which was already longer than I had planned), and on the last day of March I walked for the last time under that row of "leafless ash trees," — no longer quite leafless, and no longer with a painted redstart in them, — and over that piece of winding road between the craggy hill and the river. Now I courted not the sun, but the shade; it was the sun, more than anything else, that was hurrying me away, when I would gladly have stayed longer; but sunny or shady, I stopped a bit in each of the more familiar places. Nobody knew or cared that I was taking leave. All things remained as they had been. The same rock wrens were practicing endless vocal variations here and there upon the stony hillside; the same fretful verdin was talking about something, it was beyond me to tell what, with the old emphatic monotony; the hummingbird stood on the tip of his mesquite bush, still turning his head eagerly from side to side, as if he expected her, and wondered why on

earth she was so long in coming; the mocker across the field (one of no more than half a dozen that I saw about Tucson!) was bringing out of his treasury things new and old (a great bird that, always with another shot in his locker); the Lucy warbler, daintiest of the dainty, sang softly amid the willow catkins, a chorus of bees accompanying; the black cap of the pileolated warbler was *not* in the blossoming quince-bush hedge (that was a pity); the desert-loving sparrow hawk sat at the top of a giant cactus, as if its thorns were nothing but a cushion; the happy little Mexican boy, who lived in one corner of the old mill, came down the road with his usual smile of welcome (we were almost old friends by this time) and a glance into the trees, meaning to say, what he could not express in English, nor I understand in Spanish, "I know what you are doing;" and then, as I rounded the bend, under the beetling crags, the same canyon wren, my first one, not dreaming what a favor he was conferring upon the man he had so often chided as a trespasser, let fall a few measures of his lovely song. How sweet and cool the notes were! Unless it was the sound of the brook in the Sabino Canyon, I believe I heard nothing else so good in Arizona.

But at San Antonio, on my way homeward, I heard notes not to be called musical, in the

smaller and more ordinary sense of the word; as unlike as possible, certainly, to the classic sweetness of the canyon wren's tune; but to me even more exciting and memorable. On a sultry, indolent afternoon (April 9) I had betaken myself to Cemetery Hill for a lazy stroll, and had barely alighted from the electric car, when I heard strange noises somewhere near at hand. In my confusion I thought for an instant of the scissor-tailed flycatchers, with whose various outlandish outcries and antics I had been for several days amusing myself. Then I discovered that the sound came from above, and looking up, saw straight over my head, between the hilltop and the clouds, a wedge-shaped flock of large birds. Long slender necks and bills, feet drawn up and projecting out behind the tails, wing-action moderate (after the manner of geese rather than ducks), color dark, — so much, and no more, the glass showed me, while the birds, sixty or more in number, as I guessed, were fast receding northward. They should be cranes, I said to myself, since they were surely not herons, and then, like a flash, it came over me that I knew the voice. By good luck I had lived the winter before where I heard continually the lusty shouts of a captive sandhill crane; and it was to a chorus of sandhill cranes that I was now listening.

The flock disappeared, the tumult lessened and ceased, and I passed on. But fifteen minutes afterward, as I was retracing my steps over the hill, suddenly I heard the same resounding chorus again. A second flock of cranes was passing. This, too, was in a V-shaped line, though for some reason it fell into disorder almost immediately. Now I essayed a count, and had just concluded that there were some eighty of the birds, when a commotion behind me caused me to turn my head. To my amazement, a third and much larger flock was following close behind the second. There was no numbering it with exactness, but I ran my glass down the long, wavering line, as best I could, and counted one hundred and fifteen.

An hour before I had never seen a sandhill crane in its native wildness (a creature nearly or quite as tall as myself), and behold, here was the sky full of them. And what a judgment-day trumpeting they made! Angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim! Perhaps I did not enjoy it, — there, with the white gravestones standing all about me. After all, there is something in mere volume of sound. If it does not feed the soul, at least it stirs the blood. And that is a good thing, also. I wonder if Michelangelo did not at some time or other see and hear the like.

INDEX

INDEX

Adder's-tongue, 19, 29.
Anemone, 6.
Azalea, Lapland, 36.

Bayberry, 101.
Bellwort, 6.
Birch, yellow, 15, 72.
Bittern, least, 126.
Blackbird, Brewer's, 202.
  crow, 129.
  red-winged, 86, 124, 139.
  rusty, 66.
Bluebird, 8, 54, 65, 76, 86, 132, 150, 156.
  chestnut-backed, 181, 186.
  Western, 279.
Butterfly, clouded-sulphur, 61.
  red admiral, 28.
Buzzard, turkey, 86, 95, 124.

Cactus, giant, 199.
Callicarpa, 99.
Catbird, 86, 100, 107, 129, 130.
Chewink, Arctic, 178.
  red-eyed, 108, 140.
  white-eyed, 140, 146.
Chickadee, black-capped, 21, 64, 66, 79, 86, 139.
  Hudsonian, 37.
Chuck-will's-widow, 154.
Clintonia, 4.
Coccoloba, 118.
Cocoa plum, 115, 122.
Cormorant, Florida, 84, 124.
Coyote, 224.
Cranberry, mountain, 23.
Crane, sandhill, 293.
Creosote bush, 200, 206.
Crescentia, 112.
Crinum, 126.
Crossbill, red, 63, 78.
Crow, American, 79, 157.
  carrion, 86, 124.
  fish, 85, 97, 129.
Cypress, 122.

Diapensia, 35.
Dove, ground, 86, 130.
Dutchman's-breeches, 19, 29.

Eagle, bald, 141.
  golden, 220.
Evening primrose, 200, 247.
Eyebright, 35.

Ficus aurea, 99.
Finch, Lincoln, 74, 192.
  purple, 8, 66, 78.
Flicker, 85, 86, 129.
  red-shafted, 178.
Flycatcher, Arizona crested, 271.
  crested, 108, 130.
  olive-sided, 63.
  scissor-tailed, 259.
  vermilion, 286, 286.

Gallinule, Florida, 149.
Gnatcatcher, blue-gray, 85, 86, 108.
  plumbeous, 219.
Goldfinch, American, 41, 61, 78.

Goldfinch Mexican, 178.
Grackle, boat-tailed, 85, 129, 130.
Grosbeak, cardinal, 87, 104, 107, 108, 129, 130, 134, 139, 149, 156.
rose-breasted, 5, 10, 21.
Grouse, 11, 21, 70, 78.
Gumbo-limbo, 100.

Hawk, desert sparrow, 184, 292.
sharp-shinned, 38, 41, 69.
sparrow, 41, 94.
Western red-tailed, 219.
Heron, great blue, 141.
Louisiana, 124.
Hickory, 148.
Hornbeam, 145.
House finch, 180, 188, 199.
Huisache, 162.
Hummingbird, black-chinned, 284, 291.
Costa, 284.
ruby-throated, 86, 130.

Jay, blue, 67, 79, 86, 108, 130.
Florida, 93, 140.
Jessamine, yellow, 137, 149.
Junco, intermediate, 185.

Kingfisher, 124.
Kinglet, golden-crowned, 64, 71.
ruby-crowned, 65, 66, 78, 107, 130, 238.

Lark bunting, 191, 194.
Lupine, 200, 247.

Mangrove, 98, 121.
Martin, purple, 124.
Meadow lark, 156, 183.
Mockingbird, 85, 86, 87, 95, 100, 104, 107, 109, 129, 130, 139, 156.
Western, 254, 292.
Moon-flower, 88.
Morning-glory, 88, 97.

Nonpareil, 105, 108, 129, 130, 131, 134.
Nuthatch, brown-headed, 150, 156.
Canadian (red-breasted), 7, 41, 60, 62, 64, 66, 71, 79.
Carolina (white-breasted), 123.

Ocotillo, 199.
Orchids, 98.
Oriole, Baltimore, 130.
Osprey, 124, 141.
Oven-bird, 21, 107.

Pavonia, 111.
Pelican, brown, 140.
Phainopepla, 276, 289.
Phlox, Drummond, 137, 153.
Phœbe, 86, 87, 104, 108, 130, 131.
black, 196, 240.
Say's, 181, 255.
Pithecolobium, 98.
Plover, killdeer, 124.
Poppy, California, 247, 249.
Porcupine, 27.
Pyrrhuloxia, Arizona, 185, 274.
Texas, 274.

Rabbits, 227.
Rail, Carolina, 149.
Raven, 212.
white-necked, 182, 191, 211, 219, 221.
Redstart, 64.
painted, 286.

Road-runner, 163, 259, 284.
Robin, 8, 54, 66, 78, 86.
  Western, 279.
Rose, Cherokee, 136, 154.

Sandwort, Greenland, 23.
Sapsucker, yellow-bellied, 59, 110.
Seven-year apple, 116.
Shrike, loggerhead, 95, 109.
Siskin, 21, 63, 78.
Snowbird, 21, 41, 62, 65, 66, 69, 78.
Solitaire, 289.
Sparrow, Cassin, 263.
  chipping, 66.
  desert, 210.
  pine-wood, 156.
  sage, 211.
  savanna, 9.
  song, 54, 65, 66, 75, 78, 138.
  vesper, 75, 78.
  white-crowned, 14, 74, 78, 192.
  white-throated, 5, 8, 11, 22, 26, 58, 62, 64, 65, 66, 139.
Swallow, barn, 8.
  tree, 86, 95, 124.
Sweet-bay, 146.
Sweet-gum, 136, 145.
Swift, white-throated, 273.

Tanager, summer, 155.
Thrasher, Bendire, 252, 255.
  brown, 138, 156.
  crissal, 254.
  Palmer, 209, 251, 255.
  sage, 207, 255.
Thrush, Bicknell's, 21, 37.
  hermit, 8, 66, 78, 130.
  Swainson's, 21, 27.
Titmouse, tufted, 139.
Trema, 100.
Trillium, painted, 6, 19.
  purple, 29.

Vaccinium cæspitosum, 49.
Verdin, 172, 239, 257, 291.
Violet, round-leaved, 4, 11, 19, 29.
  Selkirk's, 30.
Vireo, blue-headed (solitary), 21, 86, 108, 129.
  red-eyed, 147, 155.
  yellow-throated, 129, 130.
  white-eyed, 86, 104, 108, 130, 140, 147.

Warbler, Bachman's, 134.
  bay-breasted, 21.
  black-and-white, 107, 129, 156.
  Blackburnian, 21.
  black-throated blue, 21.
  black-throated green, 21.
  Lucy, 292.
  myrtle, 21, 26, 41, 65, 66, 76, 86, 101, 107, 129, 130, 156.
  palm, 86, 107, 129, 130.
  parula, 21, 107, 129, 133, 134, 140, 155.
  pileolated, 292.
  pine, 86, 156.
  prairie, 107, 129, 133, 156.
  yellow palm, 78.
  yellow-throated, 129, 130, 133, 134, 156.
Woodpecker, downy, 110, 129.
  hairy, 18, 59, 63, 110.
  ivory-billed, 110.
  pileated, 79, 109, 150.
  red-bellied, 86, 110, 129, 131, 149.
  red-cockaded, 110.
  red-headed, 110, 129.

Wood pewee, 63.
Wren, Baird, 255.
cactus, 207, 251, 255.
canyon, 255, 280, 289, 292.
Carolina, 107, 139, 147, 156.
house, 105, 107, 129.
interior tule, 255.
rock, 198, 255, 291.
winter, 21, 59, 62, 64, 66.

Yellow-throat, Florida, 86, 105, 107.
Maryland, 57.